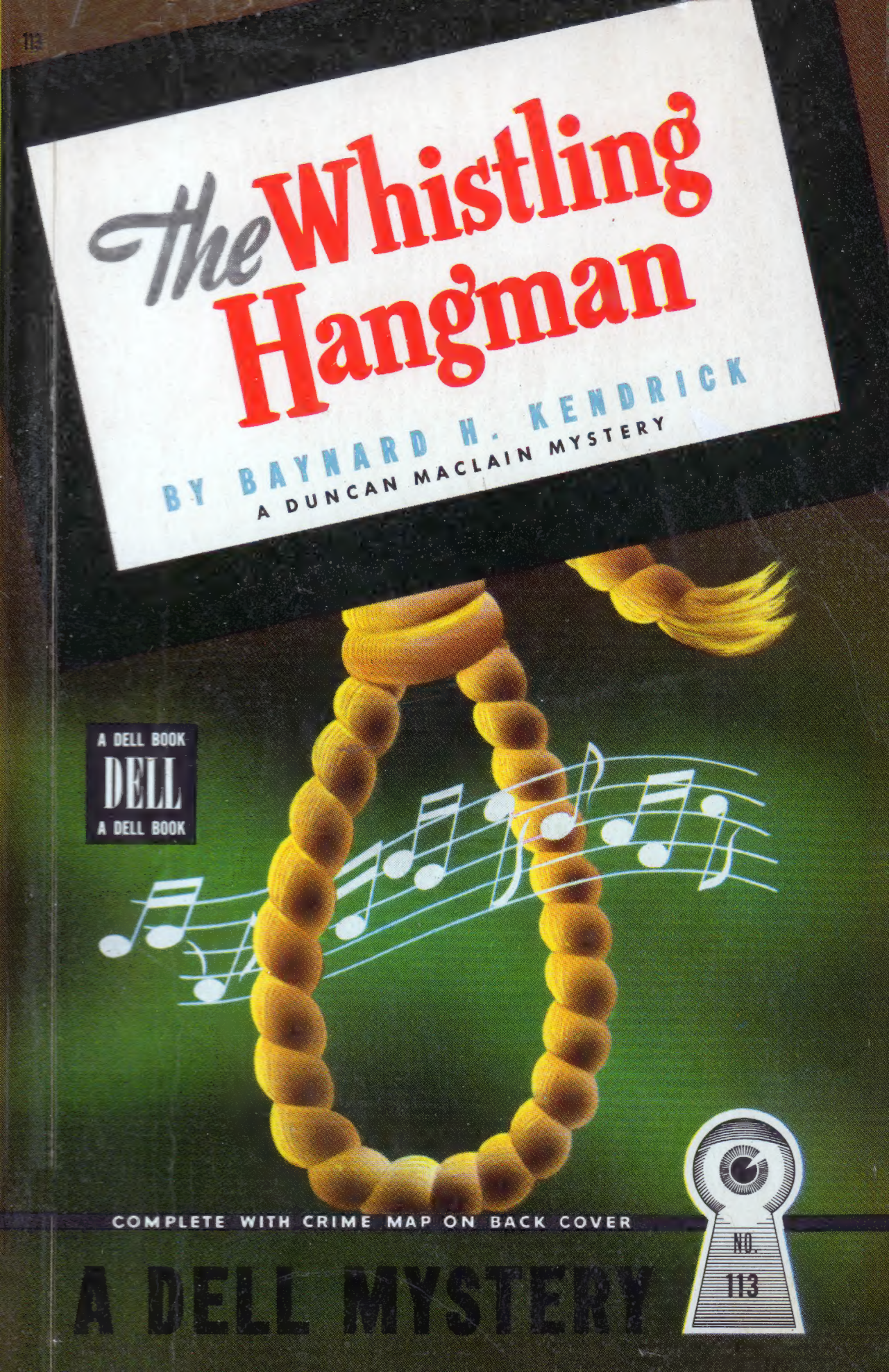
113

The Whistling Hangman

BY BAYNARD H. KENDRICK

A DUNCAN MACLAIN MYSTERY



A DELL BOOK

DELL

A DELL BOOK

COMPLETE WITH CRIME MAP ON BACK COVER

NO. 113

A DELL MYSTERY

THE WHISTLING HANGMAN

Persons this *Mystery* is about—

CAPTAIN DUNCAN MACLAIN,
private investigator, and one of the best, is tall, well set up and always impeccably dressed. Back of his calm, placid exterior and driving force are years of patient work, for Captain Maclain is totally blind.

SPUD SAVAGE,
the captain's friend and partner, is devoted to his job and his friend with an intensity that is almost fanatic. He has peculiar yellow eyes, a natural ability in athletics and a good-looking wife named Rena.

RUDOLPH BLEUCHER,
manager of the luxurious hotel, Doncaster House, does everything with perfect and military precision. He wears a close-clipped mustache and a stern smile, but occasionally his sternness is lifted to give a glimpse of hidden, friendly humor.

THOMAS FRALINGER,
a good-looking young man in his twenties, is assistant manager of the hotel. He is slimly erect, with a slightly crooked nose, wide humorous mouth and a strong chin.

MRS. COLLING-SANDS,
a silver-haired goddess, is the hotel housekeeper. Nearing forty, she is still vital and attractive. Her silver hair is boyishly bobbed and expensively coiffured, and she is capable as well as elegant.

DRYDEN WINSLOW,
a slight, erect, white-haired man whose face is ravaged by illness, has spent most of his life in Australia and amassed a fortune of considerable worth. He has been so busy making money that he hasn't spent any time with his family.

BAXTER WINSLOW,
Dryden's son, is handsome and well-educated, but he hasn't seen his father since he was a baby. He and his sister have lived a strange life—though they have always had all the money they needed.

GERTRUDE WINSLOW,
Dryden's daughter, is a lithe, rounded girl, vivid as a Van Gogh, with curly hair and a way of laughing quickly that endears her to everyone.

HON. PAUL HOLDEN, O.B.E.,
well-known young man about New York, is in anxious pursuit of Gertrude's hand. He wears both title and clothes with smooth self-assurance, and his manners are almost too perfect.

DR. LORENZO YNEZ,
successful psychiatrist, is a massive, almost forbidding, figure. Six feet six inches tall, he has a square, black beard rolling halfway down his white shirt front.

MARCIA AND PURCELLA FORREST,
maiden aunts to Gertrude and Baxter Winslow, are exactly alike. They are truly patrician ladies—a trifle shy, unquestionably New England, but gentle and assured with their own good breeding.

Things this *Mystery* is about—

A Gideon BIBLE . . .

A blue silk negligee CORD . . .

300,000 pounds STERLING . . .

A hotel PASSKEY . . .

A love story MAGAZINE . . .

A *CAPTAIN DUNCAN MACLAIN* Murder Mystery

THE WHISTLING HANGMAN

By BAYNARD KENDRICK

Author of "The Iron Spiders,"
"Blood on Lake Louisa,"
"The Last Express," etc.

Author's Dedication—

TO FREDERICK A. DUDLEY, JR.

None of the characters in this book is drawn from life, nor are the situations based on actual happenings.

DELL PUBLISHING COMPANY

George T. Delacorte, Jr., *President* • Helen Meyer, *Vice-President*

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THE WHISTLING HANGMAN

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The Whistling Hangman

Chapter One: NOTE OF ALARM

"HERE'S A GUEST worth going after," said Mr. Fralinger, thrusting a piece of newspaper before the manager. "I've already written him a letter soliciting his patronage while in New York. If you approve, I'll ask you to sign it."

Rudolph Bleucher plucked at his close-clipped military mustache and went through the motions of reading. The other occupants of the manager's office maintained a discreet silence, awaiting his important decision.

Slimly erect as a grenadier, and uniformed with the same patterned care, Thomas Fralinger stood at attention before the mahogany desk. His slightly crooked nose moved over wide humorous lips, indicating an invisible smile. His strong chin, cleft enough to attract a second look, remained firm.

It was eleven o'clock in the morning, and he was on duty, which meant he was as formally attired as a Sunday-supplement groom. His pin-stripe trousers, dark coat, vest and stock represented an investment of some $120 on the part of Doncaster House. No assistant manager ever passed Bleucher's stringent requirements until he was fully at home in morning and evening clothes.

Indeed, the clothes must be more than worn well. They must be worn with distinction and with an air. The Bleucher air, which permeated the entire ménage

of the luxurious hotel.

Standing at the end of the desk, the housekeeper Mrs. Colling-Sands maintained the poise of a silvered-hair goddess. She was nearing 40, but nothing around Doncaster House was allowed to become old and unattractive. Under Bleucher's code that was a privilege reserved exclusively for guests. The rule applied both to furnishings and personnel.

Mrs. Colling-Sands broke it only by refusing to dye her hair. She had earned the silver with 20 years of hotel experience and wore it proudly as a badge of merit—boyishly bobbed and expensively coiffured. Her essential slimness of figure was maintained, according to her, by supervising the activities of 60 maids, 20 cleaners, three assistant housekeepers, and seven housemen.

She performed the miracle with effortless ease, but supervising such a staff, spread through 480 rooms, took its toll. There were nights when endless vistas of dark, immaculate stairs disturbed her sleep; when nightmarish piles of expensive linen, always short in count, loomed up to trouble her dreams.

Bleucher was halfway down the page of Fralinger's letter when Mrs. Colling-Sands allowed herself a tactful cough. Two of the assistant housekeepers were waiting for her in the linen room, she had another damage report on 712—this time a bedspread worth $20—and the new maid on the sixth floor had taken two hours and a half to finish making up 620, a small apartment never allotted more than 80 minutes

It was indiscreet to cough at Bleucher, Mrs. Colling-Sands knew from past experience. It furthered no end except to make him more deliberately ponderous. Im-

perturbably he continued in his heavy fashion which, right or wrong, had carried him to the management of New York's most de luxe hotel. Still, there were times when he passed the limits of endurance and forced the busy housekeeper to remind him that others had duties to perform.

His perusal, without glasses, of Fralinger's letters was a constant irritation. Bleucher's eyes might never miss a spot left after cleaning or a dime-size stain on a uniformed maid, but without spectacles he could not read a word of print—a fact well known to the entire staff. Yet morning after morning he persisted in the comedy of approving correspondence which he could not see. Consequently, Mrs. Colling-Sands coughed.

Mr. Fralinger favored her with a quickly suppressed grin, followed by a wink which she decided to ignore. She smoothed down the lines of her smartly cut working dress and said, "If you please, sir—"

The manager raised a strong brown hand and pointed at her with a slightly spatulate finger. "When I finish. Will that be soon enough, Mrs. Sands?" He usually dropped the "Colling" from her name, as did most of her friends and associates. He continued a moment longer with the letter before he pushed it across the desk to his assistant. "Good!" he declared after what he considered a proper length of pause. "Send it along!"

"Thank you," said Mr. Fralinger, his marked English accent hinting suppressed annoyance. "I'm sure Dryden Winslow will be a most desirable guest—if we can get him, Mr. Bleucher."

"Dryden Winslow?" Rudolph Bleucher questioned. "Who is Dryden Winslow?"

Mrs. Sands began tapping the floor with one expen-

sively shod foot, but the sound was lost in the wealth of thick green carpet.

"In the clipping, Mr. Bleucher. My letter, you know. He's paying at least forty dollars a day for a suite at the Golden Regent." Mr. Fralinger paused.

"Certainly, Mr. Fralinger. Please go on. I'm a busy man!"

"The clipping was sent to me by our society scout. Mr. Winslow will be in San Francisco for two weeks, according to the paper—er—which you read. He's been out of this country for over twenty years, Mr. Bleucher. In Australia. If he can afford the Golden Regent in Frisco—"

"I understood you to say he was in San Francisco, Mr. Fralinger." Bleucher's heavy eyebrows met in a V of disapproval. "Is that not so?"

"Frisco is a nickname for San Francisco."

"Then please confine yourself to English, Mr. Fralinger. Is that quite understood?"

"Quite. I felt that Mr. Winslow would like Doncaster House. I quoted him a rate on 1510—"

"That I saw in your letter. Have you anything more?"

"Nothing, sir. Good morning."

"Good morning, Mr. Fralinger." Bleucher watched the office door close behind his assistant before he turned to Mrs. Sands. "Sometimes, Mrs. Sands," he told her, "I have the feeling that man is terribly dumb!"

Mrs. Sands gave a weary sigh. "I have that feeling about so many people. I think you wanted to speak with me."

"About the preparation we are using to wash the carpets." The manager consulted a leather-covered notebook on his desk. "It is most unsatisfactory to me,

Mrs. Sands. The twelfth floor is a sight—spotty and dark and streaky."

"I'm glad you think so, too, Mr. Bleucher." Mrs. Sands glanced eagerly toward the door. "I discontinued that preparation three days ago. What else, sir?"

He leaned back in his chair, watching her under his heavy lids. Deep-lined from responsibility, his dark, stern face had moments when the lines became kindly. There were rarer moments, too, when the mask of sternness lifted to give a glimpse of hidden friendly humor.

"You have a fault, Mrs. Colling-Sands. You worry too much. There is something troubling you now. It cannot be the bedspread spoiled in 712. Too many times you have seen that happen—too many times you have had to deal with maids like the one who caused 620 to complain. Some of the troubles of this hotel—just a few perhaps—you might leave to me."

She smiled at his keenness, but her gaze roved restlessly about the office before she replied. Its ordered simplicity gave her comfort, for she thrived under neatness and routine. The furniture was rich in fabric and polish, but the touch of Rudolph Bleucher was present, scorning vases, pictures or any unnecessary decoration.

To her it exemplified Doncaster House, durable and secure, and that was the source of her worry. She knew how finely balanced, how delicately poised, was the life of every hotel. Let the most staid, the most conservative, be touched with scandal or horror—with suicide or death—and its good-will melted away.

"There was something in that press notice about Dryden Winslow, Mr. Bleucher. I was wondering if

you considered it when you signed the letter quoting him a special rate while in New York."

"I know his history well, Mrs. Sands. The failure of his brokerage concern was more than twenty-five years ago. He has made a fortune since then—a great fortune. He has children in this country whom he has never seen since they were one or two years old. That is what's worrying you, isn't it? Any publicity we may get can do us nothing but good—like the Golden Regent in San Francisco." He gave a short, guttural laugh. "As I said, Mrs. Sands, you take my worries too."

She shook her head. "I wasn't thinking of Dryden Winslow's bankruptcy, Mr. Bleucher. Nor of his long separation from his motherless children. Those are personal and family matters. It was something more grave than that."

"In the notice of his arrival which I—which Fralinger showed me?"

"Yes." She placed a slender hand on the desk-top. "The notice says that Dryden Winslow is incurably ill. He has been given but a short time by the world's greatest surgeons, Mr. Bleucher. He's coming home to die!"

Chapter Two: PATHOS AND SYMPATHY

DONCASTER HOUSE is famous for its duplex apartments. With the skill of an expert musician Mr. Fralinger tuned his letters of solicitation to a note of exclusive refinement. The one to Dryden Winslow played a delicate symphony on the theme of spaciousness, service and the location on East 54th Street—adjacent to the city homes of America's foremost financiers.

Warily avoiding the commercial touch, he resorted to underwriting. The brochure of expensive engraving and printing enclosed with the letter carried the tale better than typewritten words. Professional models, always young and of proper allurement, posed at ease to show the comfort of furniture. They stood artistically arrayed on stairways leading to the balconies of cathedral-size rooms. Sunning themselves, at $5 per hour, they reclined in deck chairs on wind-swept terraces, photographed from every angle.

"You forgot the bathrooms," Mr. Fralinger told the advertising representative when the first batch of booklets arrived at the hotel. "You might have a couple of shots called 'After the Shower.' Our prospects would be interested in the decorative mermaids painted on the walls."

"Only the postal regulations stopped me," the advertising genius admitted with a grin. "I've been striving for an impression."

"You've attained it," said Fralinger. "If I was renting in Doncaster House I'd want my lease to guarantee a debutante in every duplex."

"Then you wouldn't need me," said the adman.

Whatever the means of securing him, it threw the staff into pleasurable confusion the day Dryden Winslow's telegram arrived. He wanted a duplex, and Bleucher with some misgiving assigned him 1510. It comprised a 40-foot living-room encompassed on three sides by a balcony. Opening from the balcony were two bedrooms, a dining-room, and a kitchenette. Outside the towering French windows, more than 20 feet high, was a flagstone terrace, delightful for enjoying cool breezes from the river on a summer's night.

Bleucher had not forgotten Mrs. Sands's warning about the note on Dryden Winslow's health, which later newspaper stories confirmed. The wealthy man, self-exiled for so many years to Australia, made no denial that his heart was seriously impaired—apt to end his life without notice, day or night.

The single rental of 1510, a good stroke of business during the summer slackness, would hardly have swung the manager into knowingly inviting death into Doncaster House. Deeply sensitive to the pulse of both guests and help, he knew the inevitable upset when the undertaker called. Guests so inconsiderate as to die were smuggled downstairs via a service elevator, and always late at night. A death watch by the press was an event to view with abhorrence, and the press was interested in Dryden Winslow.

There was more to Winslow's telegram than the rental of a single suite. Bleucher, not trusting Fralinger's interpretation, secured his spectacles and read it himself.

"You see, Mr. Bleucher, it's true." The assistant manager complacently adjusted his stock. "Mr. Winslow wants six apartments—rented, you might say, from a single letter."

"I've been certain for some time you weren't doing your best!" Bleucher adroitly punctured Fralinger's bubble of self-esteem before he grunted and studied the message again. "Who are these people, Mr. Fralinger? I expect my assistant to be more helpful. Kindly give me the facts."

Fralinger consulted a list. Men such as Rudolph Bleucher ran successful hotels, but they did it at the expense of all who helped them. He regarded his su-

perior with concealed disfavor, and there was irritation in his calm gray eyes as he answered.

"Baxter Winslow is his son and Gertrude his daughter. They arrive today from Connecticut with their guardians, Miss Marcia Forrest and Miss Purcella Forrest—maiden aunts, I understand—"

"I've seen them in the society news. The girl is engaged, isn't she?" Bleucher tapped idly on the desk-top with a pencil point, already working out a problem of assigning suites.

"Gertrude Winslow? To the Honorable Paul Holden, O.B.E." Fralinger rolled the syllables from his tongue with hotel zest for savoring titles and orders. "Mr. Holden has also reserved a suite for today. In addition a niece and a nephew, Rose and Emmet Black, arrive from England this noon."

Bleucher turned from his desk and began placing small red-topped pins in a room chart which hung beside him. "Gertrude Winslow in 1610, Mr. Fralinger. Her brother in 1612, and their aunts in 1614. Rose and Emmett Black I will give 1616 and 1618, and—"

"Three of those suites are occupied."

"By transients, whom a tactful assistant manager can move—to keep a party together at a higher rate. For Mr. Winslow, who desires quiet, I have already reserved 1510. Mr. Holden we will place in 1509, across the hall on the same floor." He terminated the interview by rising and saying, "I expect you to give the details to Mrs. Colling-Sands."

To Mrs. Sands, at post in the lobby to greet an important party, the entrance of Marcia and Purcella Forrest marked an epoch. The housekeeper numbered among her friends the finest families of five countries.

She had served tea at Doncaster House for a visiting duchess, and in one emergency had sat up all night putting cold compresses on the stately brow of an Indian potentate. Her bookshelves contained autographed first editions, tokens of appreciation from top names of the literary world.

She had seen too much of surface refinement to use lightly the term *patrician.* Yet she bestowed it on the Forrest sisters without demur. They were a type seldom seen in any New York hotel—a trifle shy, unquestionably small-town New England, but gentle and assured with their own good breeding.

Gertrude Winslow, a lithe, rounded girl, vivid as a Van Gogh, asked for their rooms at the desk. She was very much alive and laughed quickly, a habit which won Mrs. Sands. Baxter Winslow had much of the same quality in his grin—kidding those inclined to think life a serious thing—but he seldom threw back his head and actually gave way.

Bleucher accused his housekeeper of being able to tell how many times people had been in a hotel by the way they entered the lobby. It was not quite true, but she did know instantly when guests were nervous or ill at ease. She accompanied the Forrest sisters upstairs with Tim Bolt the bell captain to relieve them of the embarrassment at entering their suite with a strange man.

Everything had been checked two hours before. Fresh flowers were on the bedroom and sitting-room tables. The silk spreads were arranged to a nicety and the shades properly drawn to avoid glare upon entering and to enhance the cheerfulness of the room when they were raised.

Assured the rooms were perfect, Mrs. Sands turned her attention to the guests and decided if she told about one, she described the other. Miss Marcia led the team; that is, she was usually just a shade ahead of her sister, whether it was in placing the twinkling pince-nez on her slightly snub nose or returning them to their case, to close it with a snap.

Tim Bolt, grown grizzled in the service, grinned at her behind their backs as he placed the suitcases. Mrs. Sands knew he would have later remarks to make about chaperonage and the fact that the Forrest sisters were in no danger from him.

"I'm Mrs. Colling-Sands," she introduced herself when Tim had gone. "I hope you'll enjoy your stay here—and please don't hesitate to call on me if there's anything you need."

They smiled almost in unison, expressing a dual appreciation of the flowers.

"It's just like home," said Miss Marcia.

"And the flowers look as though they came from our own garden," said Miss Purcella.

"We'll enjoy it here, I know," said Miss Marcia.

"Indeed we shall," echoed her sister.

It was all most casual and friendly, and Mrs. Colling-Sands departed with a glow to pay her respects to Miss Winslow. Praise of flowers in the room was a short cut to her liking of guests. Yet on her way down the short foyer to the door she felt distinctly that the Forrest sisters were watching her departure with a question in their gaze.

Outside, in the wide green-carpeted hall, she attempted to dismiss it, only to find that it grew stronger. Together they had turned and watched her leave as

though drawn by a magnet, following her with unmoving glances until she closed the door behind her. The lack of reason made it more apparent. She had never seen them before and probably would see them only in the line of duty while they were at Doncaster House. Sisters as gentle as Marcia and Purcella did not carelessly stare.

"Perhaps they are diffident about Dryden Winslow's approaching death," she thought and, still unsatisfied, knocked on Gertrude Winslow's door.

Gertrude was seated on the edge of her bed enjoying a cigarette. Mrs. Sands went through her introduction again.

"Your aunts seem to like it here," she told her.

"They're dears," Gertrude said quickly, "and they like everything. They have really traveled a lot with Baxter and me since we were children, but every hotel they step into is a new adventure. I'll bet they adored the flowers!"

"They did," Mrs. Sands admitted, smiling.

Gertrude walked to the table and brought her soft cheeks close to the roses, inhaling their fragrance. "They're terribly excited too," she continued with heightened color. "We're all excited. My father's coming tomorrow, and I've never seen him. That is—to remember." She stopped, fixing the housekeeper with candid hazel eyes. Then impulsively: "Won't you have a cigarette and sit down a minute? I simply have to talk."

Mrs. Sands liked the girl on sight and broke a self-made rule of never becoming too friendly on short notice. She lighted the cigarette offered her and took a chair.

Gertrude lay back on the bed, rumpling her curly hair and watching her visitor. Mrs. Colling-Sands, wise and composed, inspired a desire to confide.

"Baxter—that's my brother—and I have lived a strange life. My mother died when we were tiny children. I don't remember her at all. My father's been in Australia ever since." She saw Mrs. Sands's expression and hastened to add, "He's been good to us though. Wonderfully good. We were raised by Aunt Marcia and Aunt Purcella. We've always had everything in the world we needed. He's taken care of my cousins too—Emmett and Rose Black. They're coming later this afternoon—but I suppose you know that too."

"Yes." Mrs. Sands nodded, not wishing to interrupt the girl's eager defense of her father.

"You'll hear stories, Mrs. Sands. That's why I'm telling you this—taking up your time." She sat up on the edge of the bed and closed one small hand around the edge of the silken spread. "My father's brokerage business failed before he left this country, but he paid back everything he could. He was under no obligation to do so. All my life I've wanted to see him, but he's been just a shadow—just a faint figure in one or two snapshots taken in the bush of Australia."

Official rectitude deserted Mrs. Sands for a moment. She had known loneliness herself—loneliness for someone close as only a father or a husband can be.

"But he's coming back now," she reminded Gertrude softly.

"Yes." The single word was hopeless. "He's coming back to die. The best specialists in the world have given him only days or hours of life. I hope I won't be disappointed. Almost I'd rather remember him as someone

who'd been good to me. Aunt Marcia can't understand why at first I said I didn't want to see him. Is it fair, Mrs. Sands, to come home to your children to die?"

"Doctors have been wrong, child, many times," said Mrs. Sands, not knowing how quickly death would strike at Dryden Winslow.

Chapter Three: A MOST DESIRABLE GUEST

THE MAIN DINING-ROOM of Doncaster House, with mural scenes of early New York, is more select than large. Its soft lights are carefully calculated to bring out the best points of make-up and modish attire.

Mrs. Sands's table was in a secluded corner of the room, but it really was a point of vantage. Apparently engrossed in her meal, she kept a watchful eye out for defects in food and service, no matter how slight. Bleucher dined in his own apartment, depending on Mr. Fralinger for much of the detail supervision. There were always many small but important things better noticed by a woman than a man.

Mrs. Colling-Sands was responsible for the unique folding of napkins, although the compliments went to Hans, the maitre d'hotel. It was her suggestion that flowers be placed so as not to interfere with conversation. She also had a hand in the subdued lighting effects, ruthlessly fighting against the glaring chandeliers which, she insisted, made every woman feel a painted 60.

On Friday evening she watched the Winslow family assemble at a round table prepared for them not far from her own. The Misses Forrest were dressed for evening with the severity of titled English women, but

they drank their martinis with relish and smoked with the grace of habit.

Emmett and Rose Black had arrived during the afternoon, somewhat after the Winslows. Mrs. Sands judged them to be almost the same age as their cousins. Emmett, quiet with Oxfordian reserve, sat at Gertrude's right. He was a wavy-haired product of English education. The sparkle of good humor in his eyes belied his sober expression, as did his seriously uttered remarks which kept renewing Gertrude's laughter.

The appearance of the two automatically aroused a latent matchmaking instinct in Mrs. Sands. The idea collapsed when she recognized the impeccably groomed form of the Hon. Paul Holden, O.B.E., at Gertrude's left.

He was a well-known figure about New York, and Mrs. Sands recalled society rumors which foretold his pursuit of Gertrude's hand. The notes covering his week-ends spent with the Forrests at their home in Greenwich were too numerous to ignore.

She was never able to state accurately her reasons for disliking Paul Holden, except that he wore his title and his clothes with detestable self-assurance. His manners also annoyed her. They were too perfect. He divided his attention among the four women present, as one might slice a pie.

Mr. Fralinger joined her shortly after the soup was served, and followed her glances toward the party.

"I can't say I admire your countryman," she told him.

"*My* countryman!" he repeated, favoring her with his tantalizing grin. "If you're referring to the Honorable Paul Holden, why not *your* countryman? You've lived there longer than I have. And what about the

Blacks? He went to Oxford, and he and his dream of a sister were reared by the Carruthers in Kensington Gardens. I hope they make a long stay."

Mrs. Sands glanced keenly at him, aware of some dreamy quality in his statement. It was a shock to find she was dining with an attractive youth in his early 20's —not much older than the boys at the Winslow table. Personalities are lost in a hotel—deliberately buried in graves of fine raiment and inscrutable mannerisms.

Priding herself on her perception, she had worked for months with Thomas Fralinger and never discovered he was more than a lay figure equipped with voice to issue orders. His youth had never penetrated the hard shell of frock-coated authority which hid it from view. Under its heavy cloak he was old as Bleucher, as detached from reality and emotion.

Sadly she began to wonder if she were the same—if her own identity had merged into Doncaster House, to be lost forever. It was time to take stock when she became startled at a fellow worker's slight show of feeling. She watched the guests with interest, but did they watch her? Was her carefully waved silver hair the adornment of an attractive woman or lifeless decoration similar to the murals on the wall?

Under stress of the question, suddenly become vital, she nearly asked Mr. Fralinger. He was staring again at the Winslow party, and the wait was too long. When she did speak it was only to say, "You're not by any chance developing a managerial heartache over a beautiful guest, are you?"

"Rose Black?" He glanced sideways and grinned. "My dear Mrs. Colling-Sands, you surprise me! But she might be worth it at that—heartache and headache.

However, I was thinking of our restaurant increase for the day and the delightful upswing of our transient list."

"Sometimes," said Mrs. Sands, still under the spell of musing, "I wish I were in a business where people had hearts instead of key tags. Look at the people around us, Tommy Fralinger. They live and breathe—but not to us, not to the staff of Doncaster House Hotel. An Indian potentate becomes ill and I nurse him. Not because he's a human in distress but because he's worth, to us, $60 a day. A visiting queen arrives, bringing with her the destiny of a nation, perhaps the fate of a troubled world. Statesmen come and go from her suite. Newspaper reporters swarm in the lobby—and Mr. Bleucher calls her 'nine-eleven.'"

Mr. Fralinger took a menu from the waiter and smiled at her over the top before he ordered his filet of sole meunière and a salad. "A queen is always a queen to a woman. To Mr. Bleucher, who has entertained so many, a queen is just good advertising, for which the hotel pays."

"And you and I, Tommy Fralinger, what are we?" Mrs. Sands leaned closer to him, her musical voice low.

His smile was gone and the cleft of his chin deep when he said, "Numbers too. Numbers on a payroll. Typed and marked like prisoners in for life. Unless we—"

A lull came over the dining-room conversation, noticeable as the stopping of a familiar clock. Mrs. Sands knew before she looked up that the huge bulk of Dr. Lorenzo Ynez was framed in the dining-room door.

There was always a lull when Dr. Ynez entered a room. He was a massive figure, over six feet six inches

in height. Once or twice Mrs. Sands had gone so far as to hint to Bleucher that Doncaster House would be better off without his presence. As he stood in the doorway she thought of it again.

His funereal tuxedo of extreme design was heavily braided on every possible edge. A square black beard rolled halfway down his white shirt front, smudging widely a broad red ribbon of some foreign order. Lips full as Italian tomatoes peeped through his mustache and beard. They made his face seem chalky white and the blackness of his eyes seem red.

He paused the proper time to draw attention, then started for his regular table.

"Our friend Rasputin is about to make a few more conquests," Mr. Fralinger remarked, his urbanity restored.

It was true. Dr. Ynez turned in the center of the room and headed toward the Winslow party. Paul Holden, on his feet, introduced the doctor around. Then occurred one of the incidents Mrs. Sands afterward remembered.

Baxter Winslow refused to shake hands. It resulted in the inevitable awkward pause before Dr. Ynez bowed from the waist and went on his way, and it left tension between Baxter and Paul Holden. Mrs. Sands was sure of that.

"Why doesn't Mr. Bleucher get rid of that faker?" she asked irritably. "And please don't call me 'my dear Mrs. Colling-Sands' when you answer."

The assistant manager laid down his knife and fork and looked pained. "How can one be a faker and pay $30 a day for 757? You know as well as I do that he's world famous—a psychoanalyst with the richest clien-

tele in New York."

"The Greeks had a word for it," Mrs. Sands retorted, forgetting herself under his prodding. "If he's a good doctor I never hired a maid. The kind of doctors I've been to don't have nine-foot-square beds for operating tables—nor changeable lights set in the walls of a room bristling with incense pots."

"That's because you've never known the terrible worry of $100,000 a year," he told her between mouthfuls. "Money like that makes an unattached woman nervous."

"Well, I'm in no danger of getting either nervous or neurotic," she assured him and let it go at that.

It was hot the following afternoon when Dryden Winslow arrived. Somehow advanced publicity gave everyone the idea he would roll up to the hotel doors in an ambulance with doctor and nurse in attendance. When Dennis, the head porter, phoned the train was in, Mrs. Sands was curious enough to make a point of staying close by the lobby.

He came in alone at 4:30; a slight, erect, white-haired man, with a face ravaged by illness. He had surprisingly little baggage for a man who had half-circled the world from Australia, coming home to die—two large trunk portmanteaus and one Gladstone bag.

Brusquely, with obvious fatigue, he asked a few questions of the clerk on duty behind the desk. "My son and daughter have arrived?"

"Yesterday, Mr. Winslow. Shall I tell them you're here?"

"No." He squinted against the darker coolness of the lobby, estimating furnishings from Oriental rugs to draperies with a glance. "Leave word for my daugh-

ter that I would appreciate seeing her in my suite at ten tonight." His voice grew lower, almost trailing away.

"Are you ill, sir?" the clerk asked, instantly solicitous.

"No." Dryden Winslow spoke with an effort. "I must rest. I'm not to be disturbed by phone or message until my daughter calls."

Tim Bolt took him directly to 1510 and was ruinously overtipped. Doncaster House heard no more from Dryden Winslow until eight o'clock that evening, when he phoned downstairs for a Gideon Bible.

Chapter Four: HAD SHE BEEN THERE BEFORE?

DONCASTER HOUSE is known in the field as an apartment hotel. Three fifths of its guests lease their suites for two or three years, and the majority of them lease unfurnished. The furnished apartments are rented, for the most part, on a transient basis—by the week or month.

The commercial hotel is an entirely different phase of city life. There guests arrive for one or two nights and depart for their homes in other states, generally never to return. Doncaster House is a collection of beautiful homes housed in a single building. Its continuance depends on well-controlled routine—and service rendered with a minimum of surprise at unusual requests.

That does not mean that unusual requests do not cause surprise. Even Doncaster House is staffed with humans. Guests might be startled to know how much interest the neat, blank-faced elevator boy takes in the time they come in at night and leave in the morning. Many an indiscreet husband or wife has discovered too late that telephone operators remember more than num-

bers. The suave assistant manager, showing suites and saying so convincingly, "Yes, Mr. Jones," "Certainly, Mrs. Jones," may return to his office tongue in cheek. Later he will tell a friend, "If they were married I'm a bellboy!"

Dryden Winslow's request for a Gideon Bible was received on the switchboard by Tess Buel. Tess spoke over the phone with the fine-line clarity of a copperplate engraving, and off duty was just about as hard. She was used to receiving requests for White Rock, room service and valet—although the monotony was broken now and again. Once Mrs. Hertz in 409 called to have a pet lamb ordered for her young daughter—an incident which brought Rudolph Bleucher to one of many decisions to quit hotels forever.

Another call, about which Tess was touchy, came from a quiet young man who had unostentatiously rented the penthouse for a few days. Courteously he asked to be connected with the king of a country overseas, and Tess replied, "Oh, yeah!"—only to find she was talking to a visiting prince, anxious to communicate with his father.

Tess switched the Dryden Winslow call to Mr. Fralinger, who in turn transferred it to Mrs. Colling-Sands. The hotel had some Gideon Bibles, but they were locked up in the storeroom. The clientele of Doncaster House was testy about their personal beliefs and could hardly be classed as religious. A Bible in each suite would have gained Bleucher nothing but sarcastic remarks and loss of rentals.

Mrs. Sands was in her apartment on the seventh floor when Mr. Fralinger called. On Saturday nights she often spent an hour or so in Bleucher's apartment,

watching the manager battle over the chessboard with an old friend of his, Captain Duncan Maclain.

Mrs. Colling-Sands, without admitting it, was lonely. Social life revolved continuously about her but scarcely ever touched her. The servants were gregarious —laughing boisterously in their own dining-hall, arranging spare-time parties and group trips to the movies. She was an outsider perched on the unattainable pinnacle of $2400 a year with meals and apartment.

She occupied the anomalous position of a regimental sergeant-major in the British army—unable to make friends with either commissioned officers or men. Not that she was friendless—well read, widely traveled and naturally vivacious, her company was eagerly sought. Doncaster House stood in the way. It was a harsh master, sleepless, finicky and ever demanding; forcing her to fall back on the doubtful comfort of interrupted teas and a few hours each week spent in Rudolph Bleucher's suite.

Annoyed at Mr. Fralinger's call and the thought of a trip to the basement storeroom, she sat down to consider what manner of a man Dryden Winslow might be. Her working dress was replaced by one of soft white crepe which smoothed her mature lines and made her look younger. Unconsciously she studied herself in the full-length mirror—unaware of beauty to be found in delicately curved red lips, a dainty nose, and full gray eyes enriched by sweeping lashes.

A brief glimpse of Dryden Winslow in the lobby had given no hint that, dying, he might seek the solace of religion. She was wise enough to know the strange things wrought by approaching death, but it fitted badly with a fixity of purpose which had kept him apart

from his children for years. She could not picture the bankrupt stockbroker, who had carved out a second fortune in Australia, making his last hours peaceful by reading the 23d Psalm. Reluctantly she gave up conjecturing and went downstairs.

Dennis the porter was in the servants' dining-room —a spotless eating place at the east end of the basement. He left the long board table when she beckoned from the door, and led the way through glazed white halls to the storeroom. Passing the pantry, Mrs. Sands nodded briefly to Mr. Hastings the pantryman, a taciturn individual who spent most of his life caged up among expensive foodstuffs which he released on requisition but never ate.

Dennis admitted her to the storeroom and watched curiously as she made her way through aisles of trunks and boxes of winter apparel stored during summer months by the guests.

" 'Tis a rare person knows what's good for their soul today," Dennis said, watched her dust off a Bible selected from the pile.

"Don't be silly," she told him. "I have my own Bible. This is for one of the guests."

"Indeed now?" His blue eyes twinkled. " 'Twould be a better hotel all round if we had more such calls. Who's improving themselves now? It wouldn't be old Bluebeard, would it? Or is all his time spent improving others?"

"If you mean Dr. Ynez," Mrs. Sands rebuked him, "it's not for him. And it's rather out of place, Dennis, to speak of a guest in that way."

"Old Bluebeard?" He gave an infectious Irish laugh. "You recognized his description quick enough. Carrie

says she hates to open the closets in his room when she's cleaning—for fear of finding seven or eight women hanging from the hooks by their hair."

"She talks too much for a maid—and you too much for a porter." Mrs. Sands placed the black stiff-covered book under her arm and started out. "Carrie shouldn't be looking in the guests' closets anyhow. This is for Mr. Winslow in 1510."

"Did you see the two Forrest sisters?" he asked as they stepped outside the storeroom.

Mrs. Sands paused. Dennis Riley was deep and hid a prying disposition beneath his Irish levity. She knew there was something unspoken back of his question, but when she looked at him he was fastening the heavy steel padlock on the door. Experience had taught her that sudden attack was the only way to bring him out into the open. At the first hint he was fooling anyone he became disgustingly mysterious.

"What makes you so interested in the Forrest sisters?" she asked him frankly.

"Who said I was interested now?" He returned the clanking keys to his pocket. "I just asked if you'd seen them, Mrs. Sands."

"I've seen them, all right, but I know you're interested." Her friendliness changed to a manner known and feared by the entire staff of the hotel. "Don't try to fool me, Dennis Riley. If you weren't interested you would never have mentioned their name."

"You're certainly one to jump at things," he defended stoutly. "I took their trunks upstairs, that's all. They're a queer pair of birds to light in Doncaster House."

"They're not so queer as you. What are you trying to

tell me about them? Come out with it."

"I'm trying to tell you nothing about them—except that I've seen one of them before."

"What's extraordinary about that? You might easily be mistaken." Mrs. Sands remembered her feeling of surveillance as she left the Forrest sisters' room but refused to press Dennis for details. Instead, she started down the hall toward the stairs which led up one flight to the office floor. She knew perfectly well the porter was not mistaken, for he never forgot a guest.

"If it's wrong I am," he muttered, afraid to risk losing his point, "then 'tis her ghost making a personal appearance. She's been coming to this hotel off and on for the past six months."

"I don't believe it." Mrs. Sands paused with her hand on the knob of the exit door.

"Oh, but you do!" Dennis grinned devilishly. "You know when any of us is telling you the truth—but you won't admit it. Ask either of the elevator boys and they'll tell you the same. She'll be among those hung up in the closet of Doctor Ynez—if she doesn't watch out. She's one of his patients—and paying plenty, I'll wager!"

"One of the Forrest sisters?" Mrs. Sands gasped. "Dennis, you've lost your mind!"

" 'Tis Miss Purcella, no less. Maybe she's the one who's lost her mind. Isn't it Bluebeard's business to cure them in that condition?"

"If it is you better consult him," she flung back from the stairway. "And if I hear this from anyone else you'll be out of a job."

She turned the Bible over to Mr. Fralinger for delivery and normally would have forgotten the matter entirely.

But fifty questions were running through her mind, and she had to keep them all to herself—a fact which falsely enhanced their importance.

Bleucher would have been the first to remind her that it was none of her business if Dryden Winslow ordered one Bible or ten; and that Miss Purcella Forrest had a right to consult any doctor living in Doncaster House —or any other hotel.

Mrs. Sands clucked angrily at the thought. Lorenzo Ynez made plenty of money but, so far as she was concerned, he was a fungus on the medical profession. It stretched her credulity to the breaking point to picture Miss Purcella Forrest supine on the middle of Dr. Ynez's nine-foot-square couch. It was difficult to picture Miss Forrest supine on her own chaste bed.

She tried to put it out of mind by going up to Bleucher's apartment and watching the chess game over a glass of his excellent sherry.

Chapter Five: SECOND TO NONE

THAT warm June Saturday evening was always to remain with Mrs. Colling-Sands as a panorama of unreal and disconnected events. It was hot, and she changed to a white dress. Dryden Winslow phoned for a Gideon Bible, which she procured from the basement storeroom. Later she was upset, for no earthly reason, and left Bleucher's suite to roam about the hotel, checking up on the maids.

Normal enough actions in themselves, when the hotel was following its comfortable routine; afterward —when the very air was tainted with suspicion—they seemed unbelievably silly. The thing she remembered

best was the short period spent watching the chess game.

Rudolph Bleucher never looked more military than when in the embrace of his imported evening clothes. He glanced up from the chessboard as Mrs. Sands entered, nodded a greeting, and returned to the game. Silently she drew up a chair and seated herself, not wishing to interrupt. She played chess badly but made an enthusiastic gallery. It was a double thrill for her to watch the manager's opponent, Captain Maclain, for Duncan Maclain was blind.

"Good evening, Mrs. Sands," the captain said cordially. He spoke without turning his head, but his voice was warm and vibrant, filled with genuine welcome.

She leaned back in the armchair, gazing into Maclain's sightless eyes. Naturally emotional, filled with quick sympathy for anyone's trouble or affliction, it surprised her to find she had nothing but admiration for Duncan Maclain.

Tall, well set up and always tastefully dressed, his every motion was made with astonishing ease and self-assurance. An Intelligence officer blinded in the war more than 20 years before, he had beaten darkness by indomitable persistency and unrelenting work.

Three years previous, when Bleucher had first introduced them, Mrs. Sands heard with incredulous wonder that Maclain was a private investigator, second to none in the world.

It seemed too incredible that a man deprived of the most necessary of all senses could ever train hearing, touch, taste and smell to offer more than adequate compensation. As she grew to know him better and read

of his skillful feats in the newspapers, ever eager to write of his accomplishments, some of the mystery surrounding him began to clear away.

Once he dropped in for tea, accompanied by Bleucher and guided unerringly by Schnucke, his Seeing Eye dog. Rather timidly she extended a second invitation which he accepted, and after that he came often—sometimes alone and sometimes accompanied by his polished, debonair partner, Samuel Savage, whom the captain rather incongruously called "Spud."

Rena Savage, Spud's wife, was Maclain's secretary, and the three of them occupied, with astonishing amity, a penthouse 26 stories above 72nd Street and Riverside Drive.

Her first impression of Spud and Rena Savage had been that they guarded the captain with a loyal, fierce intensity which was almost fanatic.

She had never forgotten the rapier flicker of Spud's yellow eyes when they first were introduced. Intimately dissecting, it left her uncomfortably flushed, with a feeling that she had been expertly catalogued and appraised by a trained estimator of human values.

She wouldn't have been surprised if Spud had said aloud, *You had better measure up to his standards, Mrs. Colling-Sands. You had better be intelligent, interesting and understandingly unsentimental if you want to be friends with Duncan Maclain. Hurt him and you will have to deal with me.*

Her silent reminiscing was interrupted by Bleucher saying, "Rook to the queen's square!"

"And pawn to the king's rook seventh *mates!*" said Duncan Maclain.

Vicariously she experienced the thrill of a game well

won by reading the pleasure on Maclain's mobile features. It was easy to read the face of Captain Duncan Maclain when the captain chose to allow it free play; the blankness of his eyes was entirely lost in a fine painting come to life. Pleasure, sadness, excitement, sympathy and sometimes anger played with artistic strokes in the lift of his brows, the twitch of his delicate nostrils and the set of his sensitive lips. They moved so quickly and with such surety of purpose that his dullness of vision was instantly forgotten. Everyone who knew him found it increasingly difficult, as friendship ripened, to remember that he could not see.

"Chicanery," Bleucher declared. "You call out the moves, and I have to make them to defeat myself! Anyone would be distracted—and every time you come that dog Schnucke lies beside you and breathes. How can a man think?"

"Obviously," said Maclain, "from the middle-game on, you weren't thinking, Rudolph. You went down when you moved knight to the king's fourth. Perhaps I could persuade Schnucke to hold her breath when we are playing, since it puts you so badly off your game and since I can't very well come and leave her at home."

With a sensitive forefinger he scratched Schnucke's soft ear. She stood up at his left side when the manager mentioned her name. At the captain's touch she resumed her position on the floor, her pink tongue hanging out derisively at the discomfiture of her master's opponent.

She was a beautiful German shepherd, a graduate of the Seeing Eye training school at Morristown, N. J., where the experienced tutelage of Jack Humphrey had welded her and the captain into a single entity. Broad

jaws, strong white teeth and large low-placed ears showed her breeding. They formed a setting for her almond-shaped eyes, which were slightly lighter than her well-groomed coat.

It was those same almond eyes, firm and independent, which guided Maclain unerringly about the city. His freedom from confinement, gained through Schnucke, was important, but not nearly so important as his freedom from the clutching tendrils of helplessness which at one time had nearly dragged him down to oblivion.

Sometimes his caress of the dog's warm head carried more than love, as though he felt the futility of attempting to convey by touch or word any thanks for services beyond repayment.

Mrs. Sands had seen him many times touring the hominess of her own apartment, picking books from the crowded shelves and testing their weight and texture as though it might reveal the printed word. Startlingly, he now and again pronounced the titles aloud, tracing raised or lowered letters swiftly with the tips of fingers trained through years.

At first she wondered what terrific urge had driven him into a profession so fraught with danger. Finally she realized the attendant danger and the difficulties were the spice on which he thrived.

His ability to work and co-operate with the police, and to cope with the cleverest criminal mind, kept Duncan Maclain alive. His ever-present assurance that he was equal to, or better than, any man with sight must never be taken away—if it were, a man so sensitive would find the stimulus for life gone.

There was a clink of ice in glasses. Maclain relaxed

in his chair and said, "Even with your thoroughness, Rudolph, there is no need to pour me four fingers of Scotch. Keep that one for yourself and make mine about two. I can't very well ride Schnucke home."

The manager turned from the table, deep lines making brackets between his cheeks and mouth. He looked at Mrs. Sands. "Now isn't he the devil, Mrs. Sands? There are times when I know he is watching me."

"Not this one," Maclain grunted delightedly. "Although I don't see why you haven't offered Mrs. Sands a highball too. As a lover of Scotch I am a gurgle counter; so many gurgles—so many fingers. Try it sometime."

Rudolph grunted. "I dislike men who measure my drinks with their ears."

"And I would like to know," put in Mrs. Sands, "just how you watch out so carefully for my welfare? Mr. Bleucher did offer me a highball, but I shook my head. Surely you couldn't hear my neck creaking?"

The captain laughed again. "No, but I can hear ice clinking in the glasses, and I do know you've had sherry. Again a matter of clinks—only that time made by the neck of the decanter and the glass stopper being returned. Another game, Rudolph? If Mrs. Sands doesn't mind?"

"Excellent!" said the manager, tasting his highball approvingly.

Mrs. Sands arose. "I'm restless tonight. If you'll excuse me, I believe I'll run along and check up on some of the maids. What about tea tomorrow, Captain Maclain, at half-past four? Bring Spud and Rena if they'll come."

"I couldn't think of anything better," he said, and

added surprisingly, "What's worrying you?"

"Everything worries her," said Bleucher with a delighted chuckle. "I was telling her to take things easier just a day or two ago."

"There is nothing worrying me at all," she protested a trifle too forcefully. "What are you judging by now, Captain, my heartbeats?"

"Your voice, Mrs. Sands. I have to let its tone take the place of expression. It's a dead giveaway to a lot of things."

"Well, for once you're wrong. I'll look for you tomorrow. Come along too, Mr. Bleucher, if you can find time."

She left, feeling she had cheated and been disloyal to Duncan Maclain, for she *was* worried—probably about Dryden Winslow's family, who were occupying most of the 15th and 16th floors.

Chapter Six: FAINT, SHARP, AND HIDEOUSLY SOFT

MRS. COLLING-SANDS stood outside Bleucher's apartment, wasting a moment before she walked down the corridor and took an elevator to the 15th floor. Compared to the huge commercial structures spiring up from midtown New York, Doncaster House was not a large hotel, but the halls were wide and spacious, turning sharply at the east and west ends to form a capital E, with the elevators in the center.

She had never quite rid herself of the feeling of isolation when an elevator door closed behind her in Doncaster House, and that Saturday night the corridors appeared starkly empty. Life was all about her, she knew, and mentally she checked it over, scanning the

numbers on the doors.

Douglas Parsons and his wife had 1512; a childless couple, secure in a fortune made from manufacturing mechanical toys for children. Next door in 1510 life was slowly reaching its end, finishing the strange career of Dryden Winslow, a man so ill he must needs waste hours before holding an interview with a daughter he had scarcely ever seen. With her close by, and his son close by, he was letting golden moments slip away.

She passed both doors on her way to 1508, a smaller duplex than Winslow's—furnished but vacant. Her walk was quick and graceful and her slender feet sank noiselessly into the thick pile of the dark green carpet.

With a passkey in the lock and her hand on the knob of 1508 she paused, sensing a movement behind her. It was actually sensed, for she heard no noise, and the indirect lights gleaming softly from the moldings threw no shadow.

Jumpy, as she had been all day, she swung around to find the door of 1507 open.

Presenting a picture too large for its frame, Dr. Lorenzo Ynez stood in the door of his suite. Despite the heat, a dressing gown of dull black satin hung from his massive shoulders to the bows of his patent-leather pumps. It gave the ludicrous effect that his jet-black beard had grown to a point where it enveloped him entirely.

Mrs. Sands always expected his voice to be harsh and brittle, but whenever he spoke his words flowed as soothingly as tepid water.

"Good evening, Mrs. Sands." The reddish tint glowed deep in his hot black eyes, probing the white crepe of her soft clinging dress. Lightly, with a dancing master's

step, he left the doorway and closed the door, but not before she had seen the shadow of a figure in the foyer behind him.

He had given her nothing beyond the most casual salutation, yet she could have sworn there was anger back of his aplomb; anger that a second person about to leave 1507 ran the risk of being seen.

She replied politely enough, "Good evening, Doctor Ynez," and watched as he took a letter from his dressing-gown pocket and walked down the hall to post it in the mail chute by the elevator shaft.

Before he turned to retrace his steps she opened the door of 1508 and slipped inside. It swung to with a subdued slam which slipped the well-oiled Yale lock back into place. With its closing the soft lights of the hall were gone.

Mrs. Sands stood in the darkness of the small low-ceilinged foyer listening until a swish of footsteps and the dull thud of another door told her Dr. Lorenzo Ynez had returned to his suite across the hall. With vague detachment she remembered standing, as a child, in the dark vestibule of a house in London and listening to the pattering footsteps of an unknown pedestrian passing in a pea-soup fog which hid the outside world from view.

Laughing noiselessly at the thought of foolish apprehension clutching a hardheaded housekeeper in performance of her duties, she reached for the wall switch conveniently placed at the left of the foyer. About to press down on the tiny round knob, she hesitated again. Years of hotel background had developed a subtle feel for the apartments in Doncaster House. They were far more to Mrs. Colling-Sands than the product of an

architect's T-square on a floor plan. Each one was an entity, individual as a home, with its own advantages of lighting and coolness, or disadvantages of gloominess and difficult corners to clean.

Six feet ahead the foyer opened into a great living-room, and without conscious thought she realized that her disquietude came not from the passing of Dr. Ynez in the hall but from some cause in 1508 itself.

She passed the narrow staircase at her left which led to a dining balcony overhead—an advertised feature of many three-room suites in the hotel—and once in the living-room her trained eyes swept it from end to end, searching for something awry. She had supervised the placing of every piece of furniture in the large room. The ten-foot silken divan and glass-topped cocktail table which hid the fireplace from view; the two deep chairs which flanked it at either end—all were exactly as they should be. The long, polished center table, wall tables, end tables and Louis XIV desk were the same.

Not until she felt the brush of warm outside air against her cheek did she know exactly what was wrong. It proved so obvious she gave a sheepish grin.

In the semiobscurity of an apartment which should have been utterly dark she was looking at, and checking, furniture. The explanation was easy; the big French windows leading to the terrace were open, letting in the reflected lights of the city.

She crossed the room and stepped outside to view the far-flung vista of shining lights, domes and flashing electric signs spread to the north.

Laughter came from an open window overhead. Below, radioing gaily, the last notes of a swing band's melody gave away to a garbled announcement.

Close at hand a tired voice said, "Gertrude! You've grown into a beautiful girl. I'm sorry I had to keep you waiting; please sit down."

From somewhere west a clock struck ten.

Strained and unnatural, the musical voice of Gertrude Winslow replied, "And I'm sorry, Father—sorry you waited so long to come home."

Mrs. Sands turned away with the feeling she had invaded the privacy of a guest. The windows of Dryden Winslow's terrace, 15 feet away, were flung wide, and even biting curiosity could never overcome her ingrained self-respect.

For an instant before leaving she leaned over the waist-high stone railing, looking down to where the next terrace jutted out from 608—nine floors below. Either a light shone on the red flagstones or she thought it did.

Remembering the French windows of 1508 were open when she entered, she decided to check 608 to see if a careless maid had made the same error there.

Inside, she closed the windows and drew the light silk curtains across them to keep the morning sun from rugs and chairs. The place was natural then; dark, as it should be, and confidently she crossed the room and threw the switch for one last look around.

The grip of fear persisted, growing worse as the clustered ceiling lights were absorbed in the gloominess of the paneled walls.

Guilty as a child caught in forbidden play, she glanced at the balcony overhead. Seeing nothing, she returned the room to darkness with a panicky touch—almost running for the sanctuary of the hall.

By the time the service elevator dropped her to the

sixth-floor level, practicality had returned. Her qualms were gone—replaced with derisiveness at being upset over nothing.

608 was in order, with the French windows properly closed. Too well closed, she decided, for the suite was stuffy and smelled slightly unaired.

She crossed the room without a guiding light, fumbled at the latch and swung the glass doors open.

Again the night lights came to meet her, towering higher overhead than before. But in the short time she had taken to descend the tenor of the noise had changed —become subdued, remote, as though the day's heat, reaching a peak, waited for a coming storm.

She stepped out onto the terrace, listening to the radio, now far overhead. The laughter she had heard and the voices from the Winslow suite were gone. The radio stopped, leaving the spottily lighted front of the hotel unnaturally serene.

From Fifth Avenue to the west the siren of a speeding police car wailed and died away, holding Mrs. Sands immovable—with some evil type of spell. Far down 54th Street she watched spaced red lights turn green; saw a man, no more than five hands high, cross the street in safety.

Above her, soothingly pleasant, a night bird called. A night bird perhaps, or a human with a lilting voice uttering two-cadenced notes, the first long drawn, the second quick and sharp.

She looked above her, searching without volition to locate the spot from where the two notes came. The lights of a window in 910 shone brightly in her eyes.

Above the light, lost between it and the hotel top, she heard a crack which might have been a small-sized

gun. It ricocheted from the terraced building, bouncing from wall to wall, to diminish into nothing. On its heels she heard a whistle, faint and sharp and vibrantly quick. Hideously soft, it merged with a strangled scream.

Back she pressed against the terrace wall, groveling to dodge the misshapen mass that hurtled past the lighted windows of 910 to crash sickeningly on the terrace before her.

Knuckles pressed violently against her teeth to stifle her screams, she stood too paralyzed to move, gazing at the battered, broken form of Dryden Winslow.

Chapter Seven: CALAMITY AND PANIC

IF NOT promptly checked, calamity spreads through a hotel with the rapidity of dry gunpowder trailed carefully through halls and stairs and touched alight. The final explosion is panic—turning phlegmatic businessmen, stodgy matrons and even trained employees into temporary incompetents, acting without forethought or reason. For scorching seconds its consuming fire blazed inside of Mrs. Colling-Sands, urging her into blind action.

Through the open French windows behind her lay escape—freedom from oblong patches of yellow light turned into evil inquiring eyes; freedom from the dark soft blotch on the flagstones which moments before had been a man.

Pushing herself away from the wall with real physical effort, she sped into the darkened room. Familiar furniture was in the way. She crashed into it painfully, shoved it aside, tearing at its soft, restraining fabric.

The door held firmly against her, bringing angry tears which scalded her eyes until habit told her the Yale lock must be turned together with the lower knob.

The soft-piled carpet of the hall slowed her flight with the restraint of deep white sand, but it served to hasten returning calmness.

She scorned the elevator's certain delay, tugged open the heavy fireproof door barring the service stairway, and somehow reached the second floor, leaving a staccato series of heel clicks resounding up the deserted shaft.

There must have been urgency in her touch of the buzzer on Bleucher's door, for he answered it promptly, took one look at her pinched, drawn face and said, "God!"

Words came to her then, tumbling out in an avalanche, until interrupted by the peremptory ring of Bleucher's phone.

Rigidly she sat on the edge of a straight-backed chair and watched the manager cross the room to answer. Automatically she counted his steps, wondering if Duncan Maclain was doing the same.

The captain was very much at ease—had been throughout the quick, frightened flow of her story. Only the quiet, mechanical moving of an ivory chessman pushed about the board indicated his interest. Holding it between the tips of his first and second fingers, he moved it from square to square, stopping it in the center of one after another with disconcerting accuracy, until she decided he was measuring the distance from the edge of the board with his extended little finger used as a guide.

Some soothing quality of detachment about the

movement kept her from threatened hysterics—made her feel as though what she had been telling had happened a long, long time ago.

Sympathy or questions would have broken her down, but Maclain offered neither until she was through. Instead he forestalled, with an upraised hand, an interruption from Bleucher. But at the ringing of the phone, with a deftness which always surprised Mrs. Sands, he selected a cigarette from his gold case, fitted it into his holder, flicked a lighter and applied the flame to the tip, measuring the exact distance by years of adjusted muscular control.

All of them knew the telephone call was an emergency, for the manager's apartment was a sanctuary. Beset with a thousand details during the day, it was the one place where he could retire for relaxation without leaving the house. Strict orders from Bleucher held his chess inviolate against interruption for matters less than fire or death.

"You were right, Mrs. Sands," said Bleucher as he gently cradled the phone. "It was Dryden Winslow. He is on the terrace of 608." Spotted uniforms might stir him to a fury, but under stress he grew calm.

Mrs. Sands remembered hearing him use such clipped concise English twice before. Once, directing work against a minor fire in the kitchen; the second time when a maid had fainted and rolled down a flight of stairs, breaking her arm.

"It's curious, isn't it?" Maclain remarked, relinquishing the chessman which he had picked up again.

"Curious? Why?" Bleucher barked the question as he might have issued a command to a troop of uhlans. "I accept errors when I make them. That is the only

curious thing about Dryden Winslow's death. I take him in knowing his heart is bad, but I expect him to die in bed, not to fall off his terrace when he has an attack. If you don't mind, Captain, would you wait here with Mrs. Sands? I'll have to go."

"One moment." Maclain inhaled thoughtfully and flicked ashes accurately into a near-by tray before he asked, "Had you thought of suicide, Rudolph?"

"Any manager thinks of suicide." Bleucher paused on his way to the door. "It ruins a hotel. But this is not suicide, I know. This is an accident—to our best guest —for the moment, of course. Fifteen-ten and five other suites he's paying for. One hundred and thirty dollars a day for our transient list, and he dies before he has been in the hotel a night!"

"You managers are delightful fellows, Rudolph. A man falls from a window, or is pushed from one, and you have his room rent figured up before he hits. I was figuring abstractly, but perhaps your charges caused him to jump!"

Bleucher stood touching his dark mustache with a fingertip and looking down at Maclain. "Why do you say pushed, Captain Maclain?" Business formality crept strongly into his voice. "Everything to you is murder, I'm afraid. Nobody is pushed from windows in Doncaster House, nor did Dryden Winslow jump. He was due to die most shortly. He had nothing more, I'm sure, than a heart attack and a fall from his terrace to another."

"Any hotel manager would be sure of that," said Maclain. "Suppose you let me accompany you and find out."

"Heaven forbid!" the manager exclaimed. "You and

Schnucke seen around a dead millionaire in Doncaster House! Flashlights would be popping in twenty minutes."

The captain gently pursed his lips. "Have you considered that hell's apt to be popping instead of flashlights, Rudolph? If I remember clearly, the stone balustrades on your terraces are waist high and correspondingly wide. What sort of a heart attack would cause a man to fall over one of those? That is why I mentioned his falling from a window. There will have to be an inquiry anyhow. Perhaps I have even a little more influence with the police than Doncaster House, not that I particularly want to get mixed up with this case—if there is a case. Do you think there is a case, Mrs. Sands?"

He turned his head slowly toward where she was sitting, as though he might read her reply.

The loyalty of her profession kept her silent for a moment of consideration—she had to think and think quickly. Collected again, with the edge of panic dulled, she knew there were things she had not told—trivial things perhaps, blanked out of mind by the crash of a body falling at her feet.

Mistily they came back to her, and sensibly she put aside her first hasty decision to remain silent.

If Dryden Winslow had been shot—she shuddered to think what it would mean to Doncaster House. It was better to utilize help, when they had it, in the person of Duncan Maclain.

Faintly she said, "There might be a case. I heard a shot—or what might have been a shot."

"Impossible, Mrs. Colling-Sands!" Bleucher glacially protested. "You mentioned nothing about a shot a few minutes ago."

"A rather understandable omission," Maclain defended. "Mrs. Sands did remarkably well to tell us anything at all after such an experience."

For the first time she had an inkling of how soothing Duncan Maclain could be. Bleucher was difficult at best. Under emergency he became almost impossible, yet he remained quietly acquiescent when Maclain continued, "Are you certain it was a shot, Mrs. Sands, and not a backfire from the street?"

"It came from above," she persisted. "And there was something else too. A soft call of two notes rising and falling, then afterward the shot and whistle, which might have been a signal."

"Poppycock!" said Bleucher, but he took Maclain's arm and added, "Perhaps you'd better come after all, Duncan." His icy formality had melted to a note of pleading.

"Good!" said Maclain. He reached for Schnucke's harness, placed on a table close at hand, and expertly adjusted it on the dog. Under her guidance he followed the impatient manager into the hall.

Mrs. Sands, once more the competent housekeeper, accompanied them without invitation, although mentally she knew she could go just so far. As it was, it would be months before she could rid herself of that frightful terror hurtling down from above through the night.

Chapter Eight: A MOST PECULIAR FALL

DUTIFULLY Schnucke led her master after the hurrying form down the length of the hall and waited while Bleucher's private emergency ring summoned an ele-

vator free of inquisitive guests.

Wordlessly they left it at the sixth floor to enter the brightly lighted rooms of 608.

Although it was not apparent to Bleucher and Mrs. Sands, numerous details told Maclain instantly that 608 was furnished but unoccupied. Schnucke guided him around tables and chairs in orderly array—too orderly, for a room where people were living. Occupants, no matter how neat, always leave traces of their presence, but the tables, brushed skillfully in passing by the captain's hands, were bare of books or papers. The ash trays he touched were empty. There was an odor of tobacco in the suite, but it came from a fresh cigar.

Mrs. Sands, knowing too well what lay beyond the open French doors, sank into one of the easy chairs and nervously lighted a cigarette.

From the terrace a deep voice said, "I'm afraid he is quite dead, Mr. Bleucher," and paused with inquiring silence.

"This is my friend, Captain Duncan Maclain," said Bleucher, explaining. "Doctor Sylvester the house physician is here, Captain, and Mr. Fralinger the assistant manager."

"A useful friend in an emergency, I'm sure," said Mr. Fralinger, his voice slightly unsteady.

The doctor went on from there, forming a talking picture without benefit of a screen. "Compound fracture of the left leg," he continued unemotionally; "and a superficial examination indicates severe internal injuries. He hasn't been moved. You might examine him, Captain Maclain. There are several points indicating the peculiarity of falls from a great height. I understand you are something of a criminologist."

He was silent while Maclain, with a gesture, ordered Schnucke down beside him and knelt on the terrace floor. With the agility of one versed in sleight-of-hand, his fingers traveled over the huddled form, moving from a patent-leather bedroom slipper to plain sock of heavy silk and upward on fine serge until they reached the other foot, bent grotesquely beneath the slight form.

Blood had seeped through a torn place in the sock and adhered stickily to his fingers. The breathing of the three men watching him grew louder.

Again voices drifted in to Mrs. Sands.

"His slipper was torn off in the fall," Dr. Sylvester explained. "I have it here, Captain Maclain."

She pictured him holding it out to touch the captain's hand so he might find it without groping.

"You see, Captain," he went on, "the top half is torn almost from the sole."

There was a silence again as Duncan Maclain's supple fingers found Dryden Winslow's stiff collar, traveling slowly around the neck and up and over the face and head.

As the three men watched, and Mrs. Sands waited, he placed a hand over each of the ears and moved the head gently from side to side.

"Oh, yes, Captain," said Dr. Sylvester, "his neck was broken too."

"I'd like to wash my hands," said Duncan Maclain. He came through the living-room under Schnucke's guidance, following the doctor with his free, unhampered stride.

The doctor, fat and pompous, stopped just long enough to say, "Oh, it's you, Mrs. Sands," before preceding Maclain to the bathroom under the balcony.

Bleucher and Fralinger came in slowly and stood looking at her. They formed an indecisive tableau, which might have occurred in a play stopped in the middle of an act.

The doctor returned, joined the circle, and stood with his hands behind him, teetering up and down on the balls of his feet.

"Should I have waited for him, Mr. Bleucher?" he asked, referring to Maclain.

"He can go any place with Schnucke," the manager said, "if he knows where it is. You think Dryden Winslow died of heart failure—and fell from above?"

The doctor nodded, and all of them turned to face the captain confidently crossing the floor. He had heard Bleucher, but the doctor's nod of affirmation was lost.

"I'm afraid he didn't die of heart failure, Rudolph," said Maclain.

"What do you mean?" Dr. Sylvester demanded truculently in a voice which ascended to a piping note.

"His neck, Doctor. Did you feel his neck?"

"Certainly," said the doctor; "it was broken in the fall."

"Which also broke his arm and leg?" the captain inquired. "And left no concussion on the skull?"

Dr. Sylvester's face screwed itself into a puzzled ball, then cleared.

"His collar, of course, Captain Maclain. There was a ridge around his neck. The pull of the clothing broke it, don't you see?"

"If there were one ridge, yes, I might agree." Maclain leaned down and thoughtfully patted Schnucke's head. "But there are three, Doctor Sylvester. Three distinct

ridges—hardly made by a single collar."

"So, as the doctor says," put in Bleucher, "falls from a great height are most peculiar. There is nothing much now we can do."

"Nothing at all," Maclain declared, "until the police get here. I'll have to call them, Rudolph, for Dryden Winslow was hanged."

Chapter Nine: BY SOUND ALONE

INSPECTOR LARRY DAVIS and Sergeant Aloysius Archer, of the New York Homicide Squad, arrived at Doncaster House shortly after the influx of authority from the precinct station.

The owners, wise in the devious stratagems necessary to the operation of a New York hotel, were careful to keep their political standing unimpaired. They employed for the purpose a seldom-seen, genial Hibernian known as Timothy Corrigan.

Mr. Corrigan earned his $6000 a year by acting as buffer between Doncaster House and the constant army of invading fire inspectors, elevator inspectors, building inspectors and sanitary inspectors. Although Mr. Corrigan was far from Doncaster House at the time of Dryden Winslow's death, his presence was keenly felt. It was due to him that the law moved in without the blare of screaming sirens and started their efficient machinery to work by way of the service entrance instead of the front lobby.

Fralinger, under orders from Bleucher, met Davis and Archer at the door, conducted them down the cement incline leading to the basement, and herded them safely into the service elevator at the west end of

Doncaster House.

His contact with the police was mostly through the medium of newspapers and picture shows. Larry Davis, who was thick-eyebrowed, hawk-nosed and fussy about his clothes, and Sergeant Archer, who looked like a heavy-set, prosperous bond salesman, dispelled many of Fralinger's most cherished illusions. Not until he got into the elevator with them himself did he actually feel that they both had decided he was guilty and were about to place him under arrest.

The inspector stopped him in the hall before they entered 608 and guilelessly asked, "You're the assistant manager, you say, Mr. Fralinger?" He neglected to wait for the nodded reply but continued unhurriedly, "Who first said this man Winslow had been killed? Lieutenant Andrews, from the precinct, phoned me that he fell from the fifteenth floor to the terrace of this apartment here. What makes you think it was murder?"

Mr. Fralinger colored. "I don't think it was murder, Inspector. In fact, it seems very foolish to me. That idea came from a friend of Mr. Bleucher's."

"Oh, you've called in your friends, have you?" said the sergeant. "And who might this wise guy be?"

"He's a blind man," Mr. Fralinger began, grinning. "Captain Duncan Maclain."

He was startled at the change of expression reflected on the faces of each of the two men.

The inspector's thick eyebrows went down into two straight lines, registering foolish unbelief. Sergeant Archer looked as though he had decided against a hearty guffaw.

"I suppose he has a dog, too," said Davis sweetly. "One that leads him around?"

"That's right, Inspector," said Mr. Fralinger, "but how did you know?"

"How did I know?" The inspector looked over Fralinger's shoulder at the sergeant and said, "Tell him, Sergeant, how I know."

Archer placed a heavy hand on his victim's shoulder and turned him around. "So this poor helpless blind man and his little dog just walked in here, felt around the corpse a bit and said, 'Winslow was killed.' That's it, is it?"

"As I told you," Mr. Fralinger expostulated, "it wasn't my idea. You sound like you're blaming me for something done by Captain Maclain. He is the one who insisted upon calling the police. It wasn't Mr. Bleucher, nor I, nor Doctor Sylvester the house physician. We are all certain it was an accident."

"Oh, you are!" Sergeant Archer slowly shook his massive head and placed a heavy forefinger against Fralinger's white shirt front. "Let me tell you, son, both of us are older than you, and we've been places, see? Don't go around telling people your dead guest jumped overboard or accidentally fell out of a plane First, you'll be wrong; and second, you'll be making a fool of yourself."

"But why?" Fralinger felt himself shrivel under the sergeant's heavy admonitions.

"Because you don't know Duncan Maclain and we do," Davis put in. "I don't know what got him mixed up with this, but if he is mixed up with it, and he said that fellow in there was killed—he was killed."

"But it's impossible, Inspector!" Fralinger protested with some heat. "He doesn't just claim the man was killed; he says he was hanged."

"That he was hanged!" Davis exclaimed. "Then Maclain will prove he was hanged, even if he has to go up in a balloon and let down a rope to show you just how it was done. Where is he?"

"Upstairs in 1510—that was Winslow's apartment."

"Then we're wasting time here," said Davis. "Let's go."

A uniformed policeman, already bored, left his chair in the foyer of 1510 to admit Mr. Fralinger and the two members of the Homicide Squad.

The inspector nodded a greeting to Lieutenant Andrews and crossed the room to take up a position in front of the empty fireplace, which made a dark square, shoulder high, at his back.

Much of his success depended on his pleasant, coercive manner, which could switch to hardness without a prior warning.

Duncan Maclain had drawn up a chair to the broad living-room table, and for the moment his restless hands were still, folded together on the edge with the easy pose of a child in school.

Schnucke stood up as Davis and Archer came in. She gave a short friendly wag of her tail to indicate she had met them before, then stretched herself out again beside the chair.

Exclusive of Lieutenant Andrews, Maclain and the policeman on duty, there were six other people in the room. The vastness of 1510 absorbed them without a hint of being crowded.

In fact, when Lieutenant Andrews passed over a list of names, the inspector had to peer into a far corner before he could locate the two composed sisters recorded as Marcia and Purcella Forrest. He had no difficulty

picking out Mrs. Colling-Sands as the housekeeper, nor the red-faced girl beside her as Gertrude Winslow, the daughter of the slain man.

Bleucher, who had greeted them with a stiff army bow, was earmarked as the manager by his commanding air.

Standing directly in back of the girl was a tall, self-assured man whom Davis checked as Paul Holden, Gertrude Winslow's fiancé. The astute officer estimated the cost of Holden's clothes and the sleek set of his hair before he mentally filed him away for future reference.

It was Maclain who broke the growing tenseness by saying pleasantly, "It's nice to have you with us again, Inspector—and the sergeant too. It seems the only time we meet is when you're on duty."

Davis thrust his hands into the side pockets of his dark serge coat and chuckled. "I'm getting old, Captain, and Archer is too. Our nerves can't stand too much of you. Ever since we worked together on the Zarinka bombing I've been trying to identify people by listening to the way they breathe."

"Hardly that," said Maclain with a laugh. "You and Sergeant Archer have unmistakable footsteps—particularly when you walk together."

From his position in back of Gertrude, Paul Holden gave an audible sniff.

"You see, Inspector," Maclain continued with a tinge of sadness, "Mr. Holden, like so many others who can see, refuses to realize that the ears have useful functions and that I've trained them to serve me more faithfully than my eyes.

"I dislike demonstrations, Mr. Holden, yet I am vain enough to like to prove my point. Suppose I say the

policeman in the foyer has just resumed his chair, and that I have kept the occupants of this room as closely in mind as I would the pieces on a chessboard.

"I know, without being told, Mr. Holden, that you are standing behind Miss Winslow, who is sitting beside Mrs. Sands; that Bleucher, who rose to greet the inspector, is once more in his chair close by the foyer door. Miss Marcia and Miss Purcella are sitting on a divan at my back; Sergeant Archer has stuck to the open French doors, where he can peacefully enjoy his cigar; and the young man who came in with you and the sergeant, Inspector, is standing by the end of the mantelpiece not far from you—I don't believe I know his name."

The assistant manager, caught in the spell of Maclain's mastery of sound, answered involuntarily, "Thomas Fralinger. I'm assistant manager of Doncaster House."

Chapter Ten: WHISTLING IN DEATH

As Mr. Fralinger spoke, Mrs. Sands drew a deep breath which ended in a sigh and unconsciously patted Gertrude Winslow's arm. For an hour she had been in the grip of waiting. It was a prolonged period in which she felt the hotel was no longer real.

Bleucher and Maclain moved guests about, taking them up stairs and down, a process always accompanied by more waiting; a long, extended wait while police arrived. The Forrest sisters and other less important figures, such as Paul Holden, arrived. There were phone calls too—Gertrude Winslow frantically trying to locate her brother Baxter and her cousins Emmett

and Rose Black. Mrs. Sands was certain they would have to be questioned, although she couldn't think of any earthly reason why it should be so.

Strangely enough, Fralinger's disclosure of his name and identity to Duncan Maclain gave her the feeling that matters had come to a head. The inspector apparently had a different idea; he should have been firing questions at her and everyone else, searching the place for clues and asking her about the whistle. Instead, he stood in front of the fireplace, with his hands in his coat pockets, listening to Duncan Maclain discourse on how well the blind could see—stood there far too long, while the room grew more quiet and people shifted uncomfortably.

It was really Gertrude Winslow who helped Mrs. Sands hold herself together. The girl was already vibrantly taut and the inspector, by his procrastination, was drawing her close to the point of breaking. Mrs. Sands resented it and patted Gertrude's arm again, watching the smoke from Sergeant Archer's cigar drift out onto the terrace.

When Davis finally did speak, it came as an anticlimax. He took a toothpick from his side coat pocket, put it in his mouth and casually asked the captain, "Are you handling this for the hotel?"

The captain shook his head. "I'm not handling it for anyone, Inspector. I was here playing chess with Bleucher when it happened. I'll have to confess that curiosity got the better of me—that's all."

The inspector removed the toothpick from his mouth and said unemotionally, "Fralinger told me that Dryden Winslow was hanged."

Next to Mrs. Sands, Gertrude Winslow jumped to

her feet. "That's insane—mad!" she screamed, finally reaching the end of self-control. "I was here in the room with him—right here."

Paul Holden put a hand on her shoulder from behind. "You'd better sit down, Gertrude. I wouldn't say anything until we consult an attorney."

Davis swung around from the captain, facing them, his eyes showing dead flat under his thick brows. "Why shouldn't she speak?" he asked Holden. "She has nothing to hide, has she?"

Gertrude resumed her seat and took Mrs. Sands's hand. Her sudden fury had burned itself to dullness, leaving her the brief memory of a father who had greeted her after 20 years, only to step out onto a terrace and disappear from view.

"I was in here, Inspector. But I don't know what happened. You see—" She stopped again completely, gazing at the floor.

Davis drew a long breath and scratched his head. "No, Miss Winslow, I don't see. Perhaps I had better ask the questions."

"She's not going to talk," said Paul Holden.

The inspector shifted his gaze from the girl to the man behind her. "*You* are not going to talk in a minute," he told him, "because I'm going to have you put out."

Holden left his place behind the divan and strode to the table to stop in front of Duncan Maclain.

"You've made the statement, Captain Maclain, that my fiancée's father was hanged. I trust you are in a position to prove it and at the same time find out why and by whom."

The captain unfolded his hands and stood up. "I

think I am, Mr. Holden."

"Then," said Holden, "you should have no objection to accepting a commission to represent Miss Winslow and me. I'll be glad to guarantee your fee."

The captain interlaced his fingers and pushed down with his palms to flex them from the cramp of being long folded. He turned in the direction of the fireplace where Davis was watching.

"I've heard strange things in the past hour, Inspector. Do you mind if I ask a couple of questions before I make a decision?"

"Shoot away," Davis grumbled, "if you can get anyone to talk."

"Perhaps it's a matter of knowing what to ask," Maclain replied. "Are you agreeable, Mr. Holden?"

"Certainly." Holden turned away to resume his place behind Gertrude.

"Very well," said Maclain. He took hold of the leather-covered brace attached to Schnucke's harness and in a low voice directed her left.

She stopped him close to a glass-covered buffet at the end of the room. Without hesitating he reached for a book which lay in the center, picked it up and brought it back to the table. He sat down, placing the book before him.

"This is the only thing I have found of interest in this apartment, Inspector. It's a Gideon Bible. I noticed it because I have a habit of noticing everything which I contact in a search. Before I came upstairs I went briefly over 608. It is a furnished suite, like this, but there was no Gideon Bible there. That is why I noticed it here. It was the only book in the room."

"How did you know it was a Gideon Bible?" asked

Sergeant Archer, speaking for the first time.

"Because Mrs. Sands told me, Sergeant. She also told me why it was here. Dryden Winslow asked for it at eight o'clock tonight."

"And who brought it?"

"Mr. Fralinger, Inspector. Mrs. Sands got it from the storeroom in the basement and turned it over to him to deliver."

The inspector turned to the assistant manager. "Did he tell you why?"

"No, sir," said Fralinger. "He answered the door himself and said 'thank you'—that was all."

"Did he mention this Bible to you, Miss Winslow?" Davis inquired again.

The girl shook her head without speaking.

"Not a word?"

"Not a word," she repeated pitifully low.

"Go on, Maclain." Davis wiped his forehead with the palm of his hand. "What are your questions?"

"First," said the captain, "did you talk with your father on the terrace, Miss Winslow, or in this room?"

She brightened under his obvious friendliness and answered, "In this room, Captain Maclain."

"But he went out onto the terrace," Maclain persisted, "before he fell?"

"Yes, he did."

"Why?"

"I'm not sure." Painfully she began piecing together the scene which seemed so far away. "He was talking to me—it couldn't have been for more than ten minutes—asking me about my life and Baxter's—he's my brother. Then in the middle of something he was saying he stopped and walked onto the terrace."

"Why?" asked Davis.

"I don't know." She bit her lips, striving for control.

Maclain pulled the Gideon Bible closer to him and opened the cover. "Could he have heard anything, Miss Winslow? Any sound which might have taken him from the room?"

"That's it!" Her eyes grew wide, and she placed a hand on her breast. "Of course, Captain Maclain. The peculiar call—I remember it now. The last thing he said was, 'Wait here a minute, Gertrude, I'll be right back,' and he never came. I went out onto the terrace myself."

"How long after was that?" asked the captain.

"Not long, I'm sure." She moved her hand from breast to throat, looking dazedly about the room as though seeking confirmation.

"He was gone when you stepped out there?" Maclain insisted, his sensitive fingers tracing the pattern on the inside of the open book.

"No, no, no!" screamed Gertrude Winslow. She was on her feet again, sending a wave of cold all over Mrs. Sands. "No! He wasn't gone—he was going, moving slowly out over the railing, struggling and gasping to be free. I heard another sound too—that's why I went out—a terrible sound as though in death he was whistling; whistling for me to come." She dropped into the seat beside Mrs. Sands and covered her distorted face.

"With your permission," said Duncan Maclain, "I'll take the case, Inspector. I'm interested to find out why Dryden Winslow should send for a Gideon Bible, merely to tear it from its cover and put it back again—or perhaps the police would prefer to handle it alone? It might be rather interesting sport for you and the ser-

geant, Inspector, to start on the trail of a whistling hangman!"

Chapter Eleven: A VANISHING SISTER

FOR HOURS after the routine police investigation got under way, detectives, photographers and other experts kept the service elevators busy. Briskly professional, the medical examiner arrived in due course and made copious notes. He wore horn-rimmed spectacles and a checked suit which clashed badly with Mrs. Sands's sense of good breeding.

Dr. Sylvester, feeling a bond of professional kinship, promptly volunteered much technical information which the M.E. impolitely ignored. Sadly deflated, the hotel physician watched the city official fill out forms with a scratchy fountain pen, fold them to fit an inside pocket and leave after ordering Winslow's body removed to the morgue.

To Mrs. Colling-Sands the whole night became a haze of questions, thick and irritating as a plague of mosquitoes. There were questions shot at her and everyone else by men in uniform and more men in plain clothes—by Duncan Maclain and by Rudolph Bleucher. Let her think for a moment that matters were crystal clear, and the whole procedure started again.

She built up a fierce protectiveness for Gertrude Winslow and the Forrest sisters—nursing it until hot resentment flooded her every time they were approached and she saw their harassed faces pinched with fear.

She did not know until later how futile were the attempts of Bleucher to keep the catastrophe quiet. As well attempt to hide a collapse of the Empire State

Building or a failure of the city water supply for a day. Reporters stormed the lobby, crept up service stairways and roamed unmolested through basement and halls, heckling employees and guests with equal impartiality.

Unthinkingly Duncan Maclain had uttered a catch phrase which escaped from the environs of 1510 to plunge into roaring presses. Before daybreak a new guest had moved into Doncaster House—unwanted and unseen. By noon the following day his name was known from coast to coast—the Whistling Hangman.

At two o'clock in the morning the inquiry moved from 1510 to the 16th floor. Mrs. Sands was certain by then that Inspector Davis and his coworkers had milked everyone dry. Almost by heart, like an actress versed in her lines, she was ready to play her own part. She discovered herself substituting answers for the others minutes before the actual interrogation.

It would have been so much easier had either Davis or Sergeant Archer showed irritation, but their implacable courtesy remained intact until nerves were worn thin and overtaxed minds were weak from sheer repetition.

"So your father stayed in Australia for more than twenty years, Miss Winslow?" That was the inspector speaking again, adding another cigarette butt to the collection which would have to be cleaned from the fireplace in the morning.

"Yes."

"Exactly how many years, Miss Winslow?"

"Twenty-two years."

"How old were you when he left?"

"Two years old."

"Then you're twenty-four now?"

"Yes."

"She has told you all that before." Stiffly from Miss Marcia Forrest.

"Thank you, Miss Forrest. Then none of you have seen Dryden Winslow from the time he left America until tonight?"

"We didn't see him tonight." Again from Miss Marcia, gazing at Davis through her pince-nez.

"But *you* saw him, Miss Winslow?"

"Yes—I've told you."

"Thank you, Miss Winslow. I have to get it clear in my mind. He said nothing to you about being in danger?"

"Nothing."

"Will you tell me again just what he did say to you?"

"He told me I was grown up and beautiful—then he asked me a few questions about my life and Baxter's." Gertrude paused and reached for Mrs. Sands's hand, while the sergeant smoked and made notes.

"What questions?"

"Questions about our life, Inspector. Had we been happy? Had we had everything we wanted?"

"And what did you tell him?"

"That we had been happy."

"Was that all?"

"It's hard to remember—I think I just talked at random for a few minutes. I mentioned our trips abroad to visit our cousins Emmett and Rose Black."

"But he didn't say why he wanted to speak to you alone before he saw any of the others?"

"No."

"And he didn't ask you about your engagement to Mr. Holden?"

"No. He didn't know about my engagement to Mr. Holden."

"Oh, yes, Miss Winslow, I recall, you told me that before.

"And you weren't in this apartment more than ten minutes before he went out onto the terrace?"

"That's right so far as I know, Inspector, not over ten minutes."

Then a question from Duncan Maclain: "Your father said nothing about the Gideon Bible, Miss Winslow?"

"Nothing at all, Captain Maclain."

Then a regular pause always followed, during which Miss Marcia would soothingly pat Miss Purcella's blue-veined hand, while Bleucher coughed and Fralinger shifted uneasily, conscious the next questions were coming to him.

"When did you first see Dryden Winslow, Mr. Fralinger?"

"When I delivered the Bible to him at the door."

"The Bible was in perfect condition?"

"Perfect, so far as I could see—I did not examine it very closely."

"Are you in the habit of delivering things to the guests yourself?"

"No, Inspector, but Mr. Winslow was an important guest, and he'd made an unusual request. Mrs. Sands found the Bible in the basement and turned it over to me, and I brought it up myself. We have to use some discretion in personal service."

"The Bible was in perfect condition when you got it from the storeroom, Mrs. Sands?"

"Perfect, Inspector. I selected it myself from several

stored there." Twice before she had answered that. The third time Davis surprised her by omitting the balance of his questions, which had become a boring routine.

Why had she come to 1508? Did she have any idea who had opened the French doors? Why had she left 1508 and gone downstairs to 608?

Those and many other questions he omitted, and much to her relief Mrs. Sands watched the big room gradually empty itself of people. First the Forrest sisters and Gertrude, next Paul Holden and Bleucher.

Mr. Fralinger was about to follow, and Mrs. Sands had risen to her feet when Davis said, "I wonder if you two would give us a little help—since both of you are thoroughly familiar with the hotel?" They nodded in unison and Mrs. Sands felt sure that the assistant manager shared her unhappy feeling of checked escape. Usually he had a dry quip or a little grin for any situation, but the official grind in 1510 had scarcely been mirth-provoking.

"I want to look through several of the rooms," the inspector continued. "Will you come along, Captain Maclain?"

Maclain stood up, stretched and reached for Schnucke, who had pressed close to his left leg.

"I would be glad to." He turned slightly toward where Sergeant Archer stood by the open French doors. "When you take this Bible down to headquarters, Sergeant, you might have an analysis made for me." He stretched out his right hand palm up. The tips of his two fingers showed faintly dirty under the vase lamp on the table.

"What color is that stuff on my fingers, Inspector?"

Davis came closer. "Reddish brown—why?"

"It came from the inside cover of the Gideon Bible," the captain told him. "I thought it was reddish brown, for it feels to me like old leather. I'd like your laboratory to make sure. Is there any old leather where those Bibles are stored, Mrs. Sands?"

Uncomprehendingly she shook her head; then, remembering Maclain could not see, she said, "No."

"Thank you." Maclain gave her a reassuring smile. "Suppose we go first to 1508 and then upstairs. It might help matters if we could get in touch with Miss Winslow's brother and Emmett and Rose Black."

"I think you'll have a long wait," said Archer, but he proved to be wrong. When they got upstairs to Baxter Winslow's room the three young people were there.

Mrs. Sands's astonishment at discovering the eagerly sought trio so close at hand found but a moment to flourish.

The inspector's first gently put question, "Where in the hell have you been?" was left unanswered.

Dripping ribbons and lace, and with maidenly modesty flung to the winds, Miss Marcia Forrest suddenly appeared in the doorway of Baxter Winslow's room.

Mrs. Colling-Sands knew a faint when she saw one coming. She held Miss Marcia on her feet just long enough for that distraught lady to announce in a high, unnatural squeak that her sister Purcella had gone into the bathroom and never returned.

Chapter Twelve: CALLED FOR CONFERENCE

A VISIT to Duncan Maclain's penthouse was an adventure to Mrs. Colling-Sands. She had been there many

times before for tea, graciously served by Rena Savage. Several dinners as the captain's guest were still vivid in her mind.

Sarah Marsh, who with equal facility bossed Maclain's kitchen and her shiny black husband Cappo, turned out meals which lingered long in the memory. In addition, Maclain's penthouse was a place not easily forgotten.

Cappo Marsh alternated the duties of butler and chauffeur. He called for Mrs. Sands and Mr. Fralinger at eleven o'clock on Sunday morning. Speeding through the park in the captain's Packard limousine on their way uptown, Mrs. Sands tried to satisfy the assistant manager's curiosity about Duncan Maclain.

"He has been blind since 1917," she said, "but when I'm around him I can't believe it."

"Nor I," declared Fralinger. "He startled me last night in 1510, and everyone else I'm sure. Why do you suppose he wants us to come this morning?"

Mrs. Sands toyed with a notebook and pencil in the case at the side of the car before she replied, "I think it has to do with that Gideon Bible." She glanced sideways at Mr. Fralinger. "You didn't drop that Bible on your way upstairs, did you?"

He shook his head, watching the passing stream of traffic. "Hardly. Do you think I'd take a damaged Bible up to a guest like Winslow, with plenty more in the basement?"

"I guess not," she admitted. "But today I don't know what to think. A man can't be hanged without a rope, and there's no rope—at least the police haven't been able to find one. And what could have happened to Miss Purcella?"

"I think she walked out," said Fralinger calmly. "Too much fuss and too many questions. Women of that type get hysterical, Mrs. Sands, and do unaccountable things."

"That would be most unaccountable to me! Miss Marcia said her sister was in negligee, and police were all over the place."

"So were reporters," Fralinger reminded her, "and plenty of guests. Miss Marcia admits a light coat was missing from a closet in the hall—and a hat. I claim she slipped the coat on over the negligee and put on the hat, and went down to the basement, where she waited a chance to get out a back door unobserved. You were telling me about Maclain."

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Sands, her mind still on Purcella Forrest. Mr. Fralinger's explanation hardly seemed to fit, but Mrs. Sands was unable to find one more plausible. "I'm sure he is asking us up here for additional questioning."

"Good God!" the assistant manager exclaimed. "I didn't know there could be any additional questioning after last night. I'm about ready to follow the missing lady!"

"Well, I think that, because I know Captain Maclain likes to keep records," Mrs. Sands explained. "I've seen his equipment. Everything said in his office is recorded on an Ediphone record. He has some sort of an arrangement that picks up the conversation. You can't see it because the receiver is set in the wall—I believe he calls it a detecto-dictograph. Rena Savage, his secretary, sits in an adjoining office and takes it all down too. He has hundreds of such records on file."

Mr. Fralinger grinned ruefully. "That sounds jolly!

I'm about to get a bad case of stage fright before I arrive."

"I have it already," Mrs. Sands confessed and relaxed in the comfortable seat.

Certain interesting details of Duncan Maclain's penthouse began to pass before her in an unwelcome parade. They were novelties when she saw them first; now they loomed closely personal, and in retrospect the captain's spacious paneled office took on an inquisitorial tinge. Once closed in by those four somber walls, she knew her most innocent remarks would be unimpassionedly recorded.

It was most unpleasant to feel that at some future time she might be confronted with her own voice issuing from the captain's big Capehart—saying things she had never intended to say.

Cappo eased the Packard up before the sheltering canopy so his passengers might alight. Recognizing Maclain's car, the alert doorman said:

"Captain Maclain is expecting you, Mrs. Colling-Sands; go right on up please. I believe you know the way."

In the elevator she told Mr. Fralinger, "We change at the twenty-fourth floor. There is a small automatic elevator there which takes us up two more flights to the penthouse."

Mr. Fralinger checked a reply. Insensibly he was gripped by the feeling of agitation felt by so many people on their first visit to Duncan Maclain.

Back of the captain's calm, placid exterior lay an implacable quality and driving force which many found most disturbing. He was never intentionally rude, but he found every conclusion reached through

his acute senses a major triumph over blindness. He was more than apt to announce such triumphs with startling abruptness.

Memories of the previous evening crowded back on Mr. Fralinger. The police were bad enough, but under questioning a man could watch their eyes; get some inkling whether or not he had said the right thing. The most innocent remark seemed damning when received by Captain Maclain's bland passivity. When the elevator stopped and they changed to the small one on the 20th floor, Mr. Fralinger had steeled himself against a disconcerting morning.

Cool washed air met them when they alighted at the air-conditioned lobby of the penthouse. Curtained glass doors partially revealed a dining-room to their left. Straight ahead was another door, shutting off the captain's soundproof office from the hall. A third door, to their left, led to the spacious living quarters which compared favorably with a luxurious country home.

The door to Maclain's office opened and Spud Savage stepped into the hall. Mrs. Sands introduced him, and for a moment Mr. Fralinger felt himself under the scrutiny of the keen yellow eyes which saw so much of the world for Duncan Maclain.

Spud closed the door behind him, cutting off the hum of voices from the office, and put them both at ease by his welcoming smile. "Dunc wanted me to apologize for putting you through this inconvenience," he said as he shook hands.

"Not at all." Mr. Fralinger's gray eyes twinkled. "Mrs. Sands will bear me out that neither of us find much opportunity to get out of Doncaster House in the daytime. It takes a murder, or the equivalent, to

break down Mr. Bleucher's routine."

"I'm glad you feel that way about it. Really this is a most informal gathering. The captain likes to have a complete record of everyone's reactions to any crime which he's investigating. Sometimes the most trivial items prove to be the most important."

"I think I understand," said Mrs. Sands. "He's showed me his files of Ediphone records. He claims they are more effective than written notes—such as the police make."

"They are, for him." Spud motioned them to a settee. "Do you mind waiting a few moments before we go inside? It will save time if you answer a few questions here."

"Not at all."

Spud addressed himself to Mr. Fralinger. "Do you have a regular taxi stand outside of Doncaster House?"

"A place for three cabs."

"Are the same drivers stationed there regularly?"

"I can find out for you from our doorman. That's his province, not mine. What do you want to know?"

Spud adjusted a crease in his expensive white flannels and crossed his legs before he answered. "I want to know if Baxter Winslow and Emmett and Rose Black took a cab from the stand and drove around the park last night."

"So that's where they claim to have been?"

"That's what they claim, Mrs. Sands. But so far the police haven't been able to locate the cab. At least they say they haven't."

"But they wouldn't hold back information, would they?" Mr. Fralinger protested.

"You're English, aren't you?" Spud grinned and un-

crossed his legs, watching the assistant manager's nod. "I'm speaking of the New York police, not the London police. Inspector Davis and Sergeant Archer are physically incapable of telling everything they know—unless they think it furthers their own ends.

"Let's go on from there. Baxter Winslow says he was drunk last night, and his cousins back up his story. He was irritated because his father had asked to see Miss Winslow alone. The more he drank, the more irritated he became—until he finally decided to break in on the interview."

"You can't mean he was in the room, too, when Dryden Winslow was killed?" asked Mrs. Sands.

"It's not that easy. Emmett and Rose Black met him coming out of his own room—1612—about twenty minutes past ten. They dissuaded him from a foolish move which might have antagonized Dryden Winslow. Then they got him out of the hotel, hailed a cab and drove around the park. They didn't know about the murder until they returned to Doncaster House."

Mrs. Sands moved uneasily, plucking at her dress. "What a pity they didn't leave earlier! Mr. Winslow was dead at twenty minutes past ten."

"Exactly!" Mr. Fralinger exclaimed. He was thinking of the narrow balcony which ran along the front of Doncaster House on the 16th floor. All the even-numbered suites opened on that balcony and were separated outside by nothing more than waist-high iron fences. Access was easy from one suite to another. Gertrude Winslow, who occupied 1610, was in her father's room just below, and the balcony outside of 1610 was directly over the terrace where Dryden Winslow was hanged. He started to mention it, then paused. It would

come out soon enough, he was certain.

"Suppose we go inside," said Spud Savage, rising.

He opened the door and preceded Mrs. Sands and her companion into Maclain's office. Gertrude Winslow, seated beside her brother, smiled a welcome from the far side of the room, but Mrs. Sands felt the smile was mechanical, a brave attempt to lighten a mortifying situation.

Baxter Winslow made no such effort. He stared glumly at the new arrivals, expressing disapproval in every line of his twitching face. Dark half-moons topped his cheekbones, adding false years to his appearance. "I thought this was a private conference," he said with some asperity. "Is it necessary to ring in the whole damn staff of the hotel?"

Chapter Thirteen: THE FALSE NOTE

CAPTAIN DUNCAN MACLAIN dominated any assemblage, but it was not a conscious trait. He was naturally sensitive, overly so at times. For years after he was blinded he had fought against helplessness; worked unremittingly to place himself on an equal footing with the more fortunate people who could see.

No task was too difficult if it meant another step toward independence. The greater the challenge, the more eagerly it was accepted to prove his ability. Gradually he had overcome the gaucherie of the blind; learned to move easily and without clumsy hesitation. When that was mastered he started a systematic course of training his other senses until they reached a point of perfection.

Spud Savage, shrewd and sympathetic, had stayed

by his side throughout the long struggle, urging the captain on to new achievements. It was Spud who had taught Maclain to shoot with startling accuracy at sound, a type of training given to the police, who must pursue desperate criminals through darkened lofts and houses.

Three times a week for two hours in the morning they went through the routine. Sandbags piled nine feet high in the basement of the apartment house formed a 40-foot square. The floor was level white sand a foot deep. The captain, hemmed in by the trenchlike walls, waited alertly for the sound of empty cans which Spud tossed in over the wall. When the can fell he drew and fired at the sound. Endless practice had perfected his aim until six hits out of eight shots was not uncommon.

There were other long hours spent improving hearing, touch, and the closely allied senses of taste and smell. In addition the captain exercised and disciplined his memory until it seldom failed. More than once he had demonstrated his ability to pick up two dozen assorted articles placed on a table and name them hours later without an error.

His flexible mind was a storehouse of data instantly available: the size of various rooms in apartments where he called; the number of steps leading upstairs in country houses; the sound of voices and tricks of speech which identified his friends.

Schnucke and the Seeing Eye brought him his reward. With weeks of training at Morristown, N. J., behind him, and confidence in his newfound friend, freedom to use his talents was placed in his hands. No longer dependent upon human guidance, he roamed

the city at will. Back of the panels in his office were sectional raised maps which covered Brooklyn, Manhattan and the Bronx. Give Duncan Maclain sufficient time to study one of those sections, and Schnucke would do the rest. Under his orders she guided him unerringly to his destination.

Schnucke could never take the place of Spud Savage, who had piloted the captain through dark years after the war; nor of Rena, who had served him so faithfully before and after her marriage to Spud. On the contrary, Schnucke drew the three closer together by dispelling bitter thoughts of being a burden from the captain's mind.

When Mrs. Colling-Sands followed Spud Savage into the office her gaze immediately turned toward Duncan Maclain. Despite his blindness he seemed to be following their progress into the room. She had an uncomfortable impression of blundering into a group of wax figures who were dead and unfriendly. Part of her British heritage was a natural dislike for gatherings of any kind. The events of the night before kept thrusting her into a series of tiresome conclaves—all of them most unwelcome.

Her first thought was that Maclain would challenge Baxter Winslow's rudeness; make some explanation which would remove the brand of interlopers from her and Mr. Fralinger. Heaven knows, neither of them wanted to become embroiled.

The captain disappointed her by remaining silent. In fact, he drew it out to a point where it became noticeable and where a wave of restlessness moved across the office, stirring everyone present into fidgety motion.

Schnucke was absent from her usual post by his side. Mrs. Sands fell to studying the articles on the broad flat top of the desk: the cigarette box of beaten brass; the row of push buttons to his right; the crystal paperweight, reflecting streamers of light from its many facets.

She found it difficult to keep her eyes from following the movement of his fingers—50 or more pieces of a jigsaw puzzle were on the desk before him. Part of them were already fitted together. Easily and systematically he was searching among the others, selecting and rejecting by running his finger tips along the irregular curves. She watched him fit four of the pieces into place, then turned away. There was a hypnotic quality about the process which soothed her. She was curious to see its effect on the other watchers.

Paul Holden was in the act of returning his watch to his pocket. He was slumped down in a deep chair, his long legs stretched out before him. Still his clothes were perfectly draped, with each sharp crease following its proper line. He was unruffled but certainly not relaxed. Mrs. Sands was doubtful if he ever relaxed; if he ever had a moment when thoughts of Paul Holden were not uppermost in his mind.

She turned away to look at Gertrude, then allowed her eyes to wander to Emmett and Rose Black. Again she had the feeling that Emmett and Gertrude were ideally suited and that only cousinly barriers prevented their recognition of the fact. Both of them were warm and human, utterly lacking in the cold self-conscious pose which marred Paul Holden.

She sighed at her own inability to interfere and suddenly flushed. Marcia Forrest was seated at her left,

fresh and crisply dressed but looking older and more tired than she had the night before. Her unlined face was puzzled, possibly hurt, reflecting plainly that the disappearance of her gentle sister was a matter beyond explanation or comprehension.

It was the guilty speed with which Miss Marcia turned her head that caused Mrs. Sands to blush. The feeling of surveillance, present when she left the Forrest sisters' room the day before, returned in full force.

Was Dennis Riley's statement true? Mrs. Sands determined to mention it to Duncan Maclain. Dr. Ynez had seen her enter 1508 the night before. If he was interested at all he could have easily watched for her to leave. Her unaccountable feeling of dread while passing through the vast vacant room had somehow convinced her that 1508 was connected with Dryden Winslow's murder.

Duncan Maclain was certainly entitled to know that the missing Purcella Forrest might be numbered among the doctor's patients. It tied in neatly with several things. Baxter Winslow, disapproving his aunt's consultations, might have refused to shake hands with Ynez. Paul Holden, obviously a friend of the doctor's, might have arranged the first appointment. The Forrest sisters might have wondered if Mrs. Sands had seen Purcella before. That would account for their furtive glances.

Paul Holden pushed himself up in the chair and broke the palling silence. "Was there something more, Captain Maclain?"

"Many things more." The captain raised his eyebrows and gave an apologetic smile. "I have an unfortunate habit of thinking with my fingers. I trust

you'll forgive me, Mr. Holden. Let me see. I was about to ask Miss Forrest for some further data on Dryden Winslow when Mrs. Sands and Mr. Fralinger came in."

"If it's anything personal—" Mr. Fralinger began.

"I particularly want you and Mrs. Sands to hear it." The captain mussed up the jigsaw puzzle he had placed together and returned the pieces to a drawer at his right. "Personalities become public property when someone is killed, Mr. Fralinger. I asked you to come this morning because I need help inside of Doncaster House. To be of aid you must have full information. Don't you think so, Mr. Winslow?"

"Well, I for one prefer anything you do, Captain Maclain, to the inquisition we went through last night," Emmett Black announced, looking at his cousin. "What about it, Baxter?"

"You're right about it of course." Baxter spoke more agreeably. "I've been rather boorish, Captain Maclain. I'm sorry."

The captain leaned back in his swivel chair and locked his hands behind his head. "Please don't think I've forgotten your sister, Miss Forrest. The police are doing everything possible to find her—much more than I can do."

"You wanted more information about Dryden?"

"Please. You can help to clear matters up if you'll confirm a few opinions I've formed about him."

"I'll do what I can." She took a slow, weary breath. "I haven't seen him in twenty years or more."

"I understand that, but you've been in touch with him. Was he a man of regular habits?"

"He lived in Australia, Captain Maclain."

"I'll try to make my questions clearer, Miss Forrest. He sent money for the support of his children, did he not?"

"Yes." She colored faintly.

"How often?"

"Every month."

"You could count on it?"

"To the day—if that's what you mean by regular habits."

"Did he require an accounting of all that was sent?"

"Not to a penny, but I always wrote him telling him what I was doing with it."

"Thank you, Miss Forrest." He turned his head slightly in the direction of Emmett and Rose Black. "And you, Mr. Black. You and your sister were brought up in England, were you not?"

"In London, Captain Maclain. Dryden Winslow was my mother's brother. Our parents went down on the Lusitania during the war."

"And your uncle educated and supported you both?"

"That's correct. He placed us with old friends of his —the Carruthers, a childless couple who live in Kensington Gardens. We've really always thought of them as our parents—if you know what I mean."

"The money for your support came in regularly, too, Mr. Black?"

"Regularly. As Aunt Marcia put it—'to the day.'"

"Aunt Marcia," Maclain repeated softly. "Was Dryden Winslow your brother, too, Miss Forrest?"

"No, Captain Maclain."

Mrs. Sands watched the color recede from Marcia Forrest's unwrinkled face leaving it pinched and white. "Dryden Winslow was a friend of Purcella's and mine

before he left this country—nothing more. We loved Baxter and Gertrude from the time they were born. The arrangement has made our lives happy."

"And ours too," said Gertrude Winslow eagerly. "I can assure you, Captain Maclain, we've never missed Mother or Father!"

The captain unlocked his hands and came back to an upright position in his chair. "Did Dryden Winslow ever communicate with you, Miss Marcia, concerning this gathering at Doncaster House?"

"He gave the date we were to be there with Gertrude and Baxter. That was all. He was a man accustomed to being obeyed."

"He was accustomed to many other things," said Maclain reflectively. "I went over his apartment last night. Your statement about the regularity of his drafts confirms what I found. Tired after a long journey, and desperately ill, he had still unpacked ten suits and hung them in his closet. His toilet articles were geometrically arranged along his bureau. Underwear, shirts and socks were distributed with most unusual care. In one drawer I even found a sewing kit, complete with buttons, needles, thread and darning cotton. What does that indicate to you, Spud?"

"Fastidiousness—to the highest degree."

"I hardly see the connection," Paul Holden remarked.

"The connection is one action—so simple it becomes vital, Mr. Holden." Maclain waved a hand toward the shelves of books in Braille. "All my reading and all my experience has taught me that humans seldom vary from lifelong habits. Orderliness is a habit—one of the hardest to break. Dryden Winslow left behind him many proofs that he was a meticulous man. He left be-

hind him something else—psychologically entirely out of line. The Gideon Bible I found in his room had red tops to the pages. Those tops were at the bottom of the cover when I picked up the book. It goes against everything I've learned about Dryden Winslow to believe he'd tear a Bible from its cover and replace it upside down!"

Chapter Fourteen: YANKEES DON'T COUNT

DUNCAN MACLAIN'S announcement was followed by another brief silence. It depressed Mrs. Sands. She closed her eyes and tried to put herself in the captain's position by identifying the normal sounds of those around her. It was not so easy, and they finally merged into the tremulous breathing of Gertrude Winslow. The telephone bell put an end to her experiment. She opened her eyes just in time to notice Miss Marcia watching her again.

The captain picked up the phone, listened briefly and said, "Make it around five. I'll be glad to see you." When he replaced the receiver Rose Black spoke for the first time since Mrs. Sands had entered. Her voice was much like her brother's—warm, cultured and betraying her English education.

"You're hinting that my uncle was rather perturbed when he returned that Bible to the cover, Captain Maclain, what? Otherwise he would have replaced it right side up. That's clever!"

"Not quite clever enough, Miss Black. I still don't know the truth. You don't feel that your father was upset about anything when you went in to see him, do you, Miss Winslow?"

Mrs. Sands watched Paul Holden's eyes turn toward the girl while he waited for her reply to Maclain.

"No," Gertrude answered. "I felt he was excited at seeing me, but certainly not upset. Is it so important?"

"It's quite important." Maclain spoke conversationally. "It eliminates one of three things. Either your father replaced that Bible under great emotional stress, or he replaced it speedily, before some other person could see it, perhaps yourself."

"But he set the time of my arrival. He knew exactly when I would be there."

"That's quite true," the captain admitted. "Consequently, the last conclusion appears most logical—that Dryden Winslow *wasn't* the one who replaced the Bible back in its cover!"

Baxter Winslow, Emmett Black and Paul Holden all spoke at once. The captain raised his hand. "With your permission, gentlemen, I'd like to trace this out step by step in my own way. We've covered the ground rather thoroughly up to the time of Mr. Winslow's death. I want to go on from there. You didn't leave the room from the time your father was killed until Mr. Bleucher and I arrived, did you, Miss Winslow?"

"No." Gertrude took a small handkerchief from a handbag on her lap and wiped her lips.

"What did you do immediately after your father was killed?"

"I telephoned for help."

"Do you recall just what you said?"

She stared unseeingly past her brother and Paul Holden toward the window. "Not exactly. At the moment I was too frantic to remember much. I think I said, 'My father's fallen off the terrace of fifteen-ten.

Please send help!'"

"You gave that to the switchboard operator?"

"Yes."

"I understand the telephone operator gave that call to you, Mr. Fralinger."

"That's right." The assistant manager leaned stiffly forward, a hand on each knee. "I happened to be coming out of my office, which is close by the switchboard. She beckoned to me and told me what had happened. Do you want me to go over the whole thing again? I told the police last night."

"If you don't mind," Maclain urged him gently.

"I proceeded directly to 1510."

"That took you how long?"

"Not over four or five minutes from the time Miss Winslow phoned."

"You heard nothing in the room, Miss Winslow, before Mr. Fralinger arrived—nothing which would make you think someone might have been concealed in there?"

"Nothing, Captain Maclain. I was on the terrace when Mr. Fralinger came in."

"You found the door to 1510 locked, Mr. Fralinger?"

"Yes. I used my passkey."

"You encountered no one on the way upstairs?"

"I went up in the elevator. There was no one in the hall."

"Did you notice the Gideon Bible on the buffet?"

Fralinger pursed his lips and shook his head. "I didn't. I was looking for Miss Winslow and ran directly out onto the terrace when I saw she wasn't in the room, I knew if he'd fallen over he'd strike on the terrace of 608. I went back inside and called Doctor Syl-

vester to meet me down there. Then I told the operator to get in touch with all of Mr. Winslow's party and ask them to wait in 1510."

"You didn't call Mr. Bleucher?"

"I attempted to—from 608—but his phone didn't answer. You and he must have left the apartment with Mrs. Sands by that time."

Subtly Maclain's manner changed. He interlaced his fingers before him, vigorously working them up and down as though his entire interest had departed from the happenings in 1510 and centered in his hands. His next few questions concerned the residences of Paul Holden and the Forrests. They impressed Mrs. Sands as being most commonplace and far removed from the line the inquiry had taken.

Miss Marcia gave a visible start when the captain switched from residences and asked bluntly, "Do you know anything about Dryden Winslow's will, Miss Forrest?"

"Really, Captain Maclain," Miss Marcia protested rebukingly, "I haven't given the matter a thought. In fact, I feel the very mention of it is somewhat out of place right now—with Dryden dead and my sister gone."

"Has it occurred to you that a will might have a direct bearing on both those happenings?"

"Please explain, Captain Maclain." Miss Marcia fixed her pince-nez with trembling fingers and glanced toward the captain's expressionless face. There was an air of wariness about her which communicated itself to Mrs. Sands. The housekeeper felt sure that any attempt to implicate a member of the Winslow clan would meet open and hostile resistance from Marcia

Forrest.

"I'll be glad to," said Maclain smoothly. "Dryden Winslow's lavish expenditures indicate that he was a man of wealth. He was close to death, and knew it. Is it unreasonable to suppose, Miss Forrest, that his affairs were already put in order?"

"I've said before, Captain Maclain, that I know nothing of Dryden Winslow's affairs."

"That makes it all the more extraordinary, doesn't it? You've been the guardian of his children during their lifetime."

"With my sister."

"With your sister of course," the captain amended. "Is there a legal firm in New York which represented him?"

"None."

"He never gave you the name of his solicitors in Australia?"

"Never."

"Do you know of any firm representing him in London, Mr. Black?"

"I regret that I can't help you either, Captain Maclain."

"His bankers were Kraus & Kane, Ltd., of Melbourne," Baxter Winslow supplied. "At least his drafts were all drawn on them. Isn't that right, Aunt Marcia?"

"Yes," said Miss Forrest. "Perhaps he has a safe-deposit box there."

"Cable them, Spud, and find out," Maclain directed his partner, who was unobtrusively smoking in a far corner of the room.

A silver chime concealed by the paneling of the wall issued a soft summons. The captain reached out and

touched one of the row of buttons by his side. "When you hear the signal," said a voice issuing from the wall, "the time will be twelve-fifty-nine and one-quarter."

"Since I can't see the time," Maclain explained, "I have a special wire connected with the telephone company's time bureau."

He stood up. "I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to excuse me. That was the dinner chime which sounded a moment ago. We dine at one on Sundays. If it won't inconvenience Mr. Fralinger and Mrs. Colling-Sands, I'd like them to remain and join me. There're a few minor things I haven't had a chance to discuss."

"When shall we hear from you?" asked Paul Holden.

"Shortly, I hope," said Duncan Maclain.

Under the warming influence of a cocktail and the magic cooking of Sarah Marsh some of Mrs. Sands's tense discomfort slipped away. She saw that Mr. Fralinger was relaxing too. Before the meal was through, the captain had learned of Baxter Winslow's refusal to shake hands with Dr. Ynez. Without apparent questioning he adroitly forced the matter further.

Mrs. Sands told him of her talk with Dennis Riley and the head porter's assurance that Miss Purcella was one of the doctor's regular patients. Unwittingly she added much conjecture of her own.

Over the coffee Maclain said thoughtfully, "I believe you'll have the Winslow party with you for a few days longer. Both of you can help me while they're there."

"The police can't force them to stay, can they?" Mr. Fralinger asked.

"They never use force," said Maclain with a smile, "but their methods are most persuasive. I want you

both to keep your eyes open. And ask the co-operation of the girl on the switchboard. I'm not entirely satisfied about Miss Purcella's disappearance. She may try to communicate with Miss Marcia."

"And what about Doctor Ynez?" asked Mrs. Sands.

"Officially," said the captain, "I'm not interested. Unofficially, anything you can find out about him will be gratefully received."

Long after Mrs. Sands and the assistant manager had departed Duncan Maclain sat in his office with Spud Savage, slipping one record after another onto the Ediphone beside his desk. Through an electric pickup the entire morning's conversation was reproduced through the Capehart in the corner.

After the third repetition the captain reached for the jigsaw puzzle in his drawer and dumped the pieces on his desk, but he made no attempt to put them together. Idly he shoved them about with his forefinger. "What do you make of it, Spud?" he asked after a time.

Spud tore a sheet of paper from a pad which he held on his knee. "It's confusing, Dunc. I've listed them here. See if you agree. Marcia Forrest, Baxter Winslow and his sister are obviously Yankees, and talk that way. We can cut them out."

"Right," Maclain agreed. "Go on."

"That leaves Emmet and Rose Black, Fralinger and Mrs. Sands, and Paul Holden, all of whom speak with an English accent—but none of them speak alike. Why?"

"For many complex reasons," said Maclain, stirring the pieces on his desk. "After Emmett Black you can write Oxford. It's as noticeable as a Southern drawl. After Fralinger you might put cockney plus United

States. Cockney's harder to wipe out by education than East Side New York. After Mrs. Colling-Sands mark English plus United States. In fact, Rose Black has the only pure accent in the crowd."

"And why," asked Spud with a glint in his yellow eyes, "are you holding out on the Honorable Paul Holden, O.B.E."

"Because," said Maclain with a grin, "if he's an Englishman, Schnucke's a Pomeranian—and ought to be put in a show."

Chapter Fifteen: A METHOD FOR HANGING

THE LATE AFTERNOON SUN was slanting through the double doors which protected the office from outside heat when Rena Savage announced Inspector Davis and Sergeant Archer. The captain pressed a button on his desk which shut off the big Capehart in the corner, but not before the inspector had caught snatches of the morning's interview with the Winslow family.

"You're breathing like porpoises," said Maclain, smiling. "Wait a minute, Rena. I think a Scotch highball might relieve their pains."

"I'd like to dive in a pool of it." The chair squeaked under the sergeant's bulk, and a whiff of cigar smoke reached the captain's nostrils.

"You can include me, too, Mrs. Savage," said Davis, breathing heavily. "We've been looking over the roof at Doncaster House. I feel like I was done on both sides. What did you get out of the family, Captain?"

Maclain was silent while Rena slid up a panel in the corner of the room, disclosing a well-stocked buffet. He waited until the clink of ice and the swish of soda an-

nounced the drinks.

Rena served Davis and the sergeant and placed a drink on the desk which Maclain picked up without groping.

Sergeant Archer gave a confused frown. "Every time I come in here, Captain, I'm ready to swear you can see. Now how the hell did you find that drink?"

"After a while I won't have any secrets from you two at all!" The captain appreciatively sipped his Scotch and set it down again. "If you'll look closely you'll see there's a waterproof square set flush in the top of the desk. Rena always places my drinks on it, so I know exactly where they are. I can measure the distance by touching the push buttons on my right and moving on from there."

"Some time," said Davis, "I'm going to get you to give me a little training. I can't get up in my own room at night without barking my shins on a chair. . . . I was asking you what you got out of the Winslow family."

"I thought you were telling me what you found on the roof of Doncaster House." The captain lighted a cigarette in defense of Sergeant Archer's cigar and leaned back in his chair.

Rena smiled at the two officers and told them, "There's plenty more on the buffet when those run out."

Inspector Davis watched her admiringly through the door to the adjoining room which served as her office. "We've been playing around together a long time, Captain. Archer and I didn't come up here to fence with you—and you know it. I'll make a deal. You're interested in this murder, or you wouldn't have taken it on. It's the screwiest thing I've run up against since I've

been with the department—and that's longer than I want to think about. You're not trying to protect a murderer. Why not throw in together?"

"All right," said Maclain after a moment, "but there's a condition."

"Humph!" the sergeant grunted. "I told him there'd be conditions!"

"Well, I don't think this one's unreasonable. We exchange facts—and not theories."

"Who mentioned theories?" asked Davis.

"I did. I have several already, but I can't prove them. That's why I don't want to say what they are. I'm sure you must have some yourself."

"Too many," the inspector admitted disgustedly, "and too many facts too. Which ones would you like to know?"

"First, about the reddish-brown substance on the inside cover of the Gideon Bible. Was it old leather, as I thought?"

Davis looked toward Archer, and the sergeant said, "Yes, it was. I checked on that about an hour ago. For the life of me—"

"It's just another fact, Sergeant," interrupted Maclain. "Let's look at it this way. Dryden Winslow wanted that Gideon Bible for some specific purpose. I doubt if the purpose was reading. Now we have one fact to go on. During the time it was in his possession he placed something covered with old leather between the covers."

"Why?" asked Archer.

"Tut, tut, Sergeant," said Maclain chidingly, "that's what I was afraid of; theories right away!"

"Maybe it was a jewel box," suggested Davis. "He

brought—" The inspector stopped with the sentence hung in mid-air.

Maclain chuckled. "What did he bring, Inspector?"

Renewed clouds of cigar smoke drifted across the desk to Maclain, and with it the gentle pat of fingers on cloth as the inspector tapped his hand against his knee.

"Nothing of value with him," Davis concluded after a few more tappings.

The captain sighed and ran a hand back over his crisp black hair. Then he pushed back his chair and stood up. "Well, I'm glad both of you dropped in. We seem to be right back where we started."

"You mean you're not going to play?" asked Davis, a trace of gruffness in his voice.

"I mean *you're* not going to play." The captain's manner was chill, his friendly tone gone. "I don't know what gets into you, Davis. I want to help, and you'll never let me. I've never tried to double-cross you or rob you of any of your glory—yet consistently you try to play me for a fool."

"I don't get you."

"Oh yes, you do," Maclain persisted. "Why didn't you go ahead and tell me what Dryden Winslow brought? Or do you want me to tell you? I went over his baggage last night myself—and returned the letter of credit so you could have the pleasure of finding it."

"The letter of credit!"

"Yes, the letter of credit," Maclain mimicked. "—300,000 pounds sterling! About a million dollars and a half! That's a lot of money, Inspector, I'll admit—but I thought we were both going to come clean."

"How in the devil—?" asked Davis in a whisper.

"My fingers again, Inspector. The amount was punched in the letter of credit with a check writer. It made it rather easy. And the Australian bankers, Kraus & Kane, Ltd., use a heavily embossed letterhead. It could hardly be missed."

"I'm sorry, Captain." Davis's statement was genuinely contrite. "I had orders from the commissioner himself not to tip that letter of credit to anyone—just yet. I give you my word on that."

"Well, you didn't tip it." The captain sat down again and drew his chair close to the desk. "We'll forget it. Let's take up the facts you can talk about. You've had no orders to keep quiet about the roof of the hotel, have you?"

"None," said Davis, grinning, "but it won't do you much good. There's a small roof garden up there which Bleucher says is seldom used by the guests."

"That's the top of the seventeenth floor, isn't it?"

"Yes. But a balcony about four feet wide runs all the way along the front of the house on the sixteenth. It's impossible to drop a rope from the roof of the hotel down to the terrace where Winslow was hanged."

"Then just how do you figure he was hanged, Inspector?"

"Theories?" asked Davis, chuckling.

"Yes," said Maclain. "I'm willing to play with them a little, since you've been so frank with me. You tell me about how you think he was hanged, and I'll tell you about what I think he put in the cover of the Gideon Bible. Maybe we can make a sandwich."

"There's only one way he could have been hanged, Captain. The murderer got out onto the balcony on the sixteenth floor. He had a long rope looped two or

three times in the middle—"

"And what held in the loops?"

"They might have been tied in with light thread that would break at a jerk."

"Did you find any such thread on the terrace?"

"No. That isn't saying it wasn't there. The wind might have blown it away. I figure the murderer signaled to Winslow and brought him out onto the terrace. He dropped the loop over Winslow's head, then jerked the two ends until the loops tightened around Winslow's neck. Winslow was a small man. The murderer swung him out over the balcony, let go one end of the rope, and dropped him down."

Maclain pushed back his chair again and stood up, saying in a conversational tone, "Rena, will you ask Cappo to bring my hat and stick, and get Schnucke?"

"Darn it!" Sergeant Archer exclaimed. "I wish you'd announce when you're going to talk to her through those detecto-dictographs! I always feel like she's been in the room here with us without my seeing her. What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to take you two over to Doncaster House," said Duncan Maclain, "and let you hang the inspector by the method he just described!"

Chapter Sixteen: GRAINS OF SAND

INSPECTOR LARRY DAVIS led the way across the lobby of Doncaster House Hotel and stepped aside for Maclain and Sergeant Archer to precede him into the elevator. Two persistent reporters clutched at his elbows, but he dismissed them brusquely with: "Nothing more, boys. I'll give you a chance if anything breaks."

The boy at the controls glanced inquiringly at them and said, "Floor, please."

"Is Mr. Bleucher in his apartment?" asked Maclain.

"I believe so, sir. Is he expecting you?"

"He's probably expecting anything by now," the captain grinned. "Let us off at the second."

Rudolph Bleucher may have been upset, but his deep-lined face showed only courteous inquiry when he admitted them to his suite. He listened without comment while the captain explained the purpose of their visit and finished by asking, "Can you get us some rope, Rudolph? Fifty feet will be ample."

The manager shrugged. "I suppose someday these worries will cease, Captain. I ask you only to be discreet. To go through the halls carrying rope after last night—heaven forbid!"

"I'll shove it under my coat," Sergeant Archer promised. "It can't make me stick out much more than I do already."

"Thank you, Sergeant. You have all been most considerate. A glass of Hochheimer while we're waiting?"

Mr. Bleucher filled four glasses on the tray, and went to the phone to call the house porter. "What is it you wish to do, Captain Maclain?"

The captain twirled the stem of his glass between his fingers, sipped the wine and set it down. "I want to know something of the guests on the fifteenth floor. You have a Doctor Lorenzo Ynez, I believe, in 1507."

Bleucher's heavy lids flickered over his black eyes. "You already know something of him, Captain. What about Doctor Ynez?"

"Yes," said Davis, "what about him? Where does he come in?"

"I don't know that he comes in," Maclain answered, "and I certainly don't want to stir up any trouble among innocent guests. Let's say I'm trying to get a line on possible witnesses."

"Don't mind me," said the inspector. "Go ahead."

"How long has Doctor Ynez been here, Mr. Bleucher?"

"Two years. He has a lease for one more."

"What's his rental?"

"Seventy-five hundred."

"He's successful then." The captain sipped his wine again.

"All the guests of Doncaster House are successful," Bleucher declared a trifle formally. "He's a physician of some standing."

"A surgeon?"

"I never pry into my guests' affairs so long as their references are satisfactory, but I believe not, Captain. He's a psychoanalyst, perhaps a psychiatrist—I'm not sure."

"Paul Holden has the room next to him, hasn't he, Rudolph?"

"You seem to have the floor plan clearly in mind."

"Not quite—1508 is vacant, I know. Who's in 1512?"

"Splendid people! Mr. Douglas Parsons and his wife." Bleucher's enthusiasm conveyed that his guests could do no wrong. "He's a manufacturer of mechanical toys, and this month they're away in the mountains. The other four apartments on the fifteenth floor are closed for the summer. In fact, most of my guests are away, fortunately."

The buzzer of the apartment door interrupted, and Bleucher admitted Dennis Riley the head porter. The

stalwart Irishman stood stiffly in the manager's presence, holding out a coil of rope and gravely ignoring the other three men in the room.

" 'Tis the best I could do, Mr. Bleucher," he said. "It's trunk rope and strong enough. Would you be wanting something tied?"

"If I did I'd tell you so," Bleucher snapped in dismissal.

When the Irishman had closed the door behind him the manager said ruefully, "The request for this rope will be all over the basement in ten minutes. What do we do now?"

"Dryden Winslow's room first. I'm going to try to hang the inspector."

Schnucke and her master moved with such flexible ease and assurance that most people found it difficult to keep pace with Duncan Maclain. They were halfway down the corridor from the elevator on the 15th floor when the captain turned and retraced his steps. Anxious to get out of the hallway as quickly as possible, Bleucher called, "—1510's this way!"

"I know it," said Maclain shortly. "Come here, Rudolph."

Unwillingly the manager complied. The captain had stopped close by the elevator doors and was going through the slow motions of a man wiping his feet on a doormat.

Schnucke was watching her master, one ear cocked at a puzzled angle, but she attended strictly to business each time Maclain ordered her forward.

The harassed manager exclaimed, "What are you doing, Captain?—dancing?"

Maclain's face flashed quick delight, then sobered.

He stopped his onward movement by the elevator door where a large stone urn served as a receptacle for consumed cigarettes and cigars. Schnucke signaled the obstacle to their progress. Obediently the captain stepped out from the wall, bent forward, sniffed and came quickly erect.

Davis and Archer had joined the manager, and Maclain's fantastic actions held them silently watching. Once more the captain leaned over and ran his fingertips along the nap of the thick green carpet. With his hand he followed a course along the floor, up the side of the stone urn, and lightly circled the rim with two fingers before he stood up straight.

Davis took a toothpick from his pocket, inserted it between his teeth and said helpfully, "It's a stone jar, Captain, with sand in it, and a couple of cigarettes and a cigar butt on top."

The captain's answer was almost mechanical. "Good God, Inspector, do you think I need an eye-witness description of a half-smoked, stinking cigar? How often are your halls swept, Rudolph?"

"Every day of course." He bridled, as he always did at real or fancied slurs on Doncaster House.

Maclain ignored his friend's hurt tone and went calmly on. "Vacuumed?"

"Certainly."

"Today?"

"Wait! No!" Bleucher grasped at his temples, seeking to check a blood pressure about to climb out of bounds. "This business has me crazy. It's Sunday. We don't vacuum on Sunday. We have our own system, but it still makes a certain amount of noise. And why?"

"There's sand on the floor," said Maclain. "Enough

of it in the carpet so that I could feel it through my shoes. But then my feet are probably more sensitive than yours. There was sand here when I got out of this elevator last night, but I had no time to investigate."

Bleucher laughed. "Sometimes, Captain, you make so much of nothing. I'd hate to have you for a permanent guest in my hotel. A houseman cleans those out every morning and changes the sand—"

"All of it?" Maclain interrupted quickly.

"No, just the sand on top. He spilled some and didn't sweep it all up. The sand you felt last night might have spilled over the edge when a guest snuffed out a cigar. Are you satisfied now?"

Watching the captain's face, Inspector Davis took the toothpick from his mouth, broke it in two and dropped it in the jar.

"I'll bite," he told Bleucher. "Is he satisfied, or isn't he? I don't think he is. There's something more on his mind. What is it, Captain?"

"This," said Maclain after a pause. "The very strictness with which your hotel is run, Rudolph, proves there's something wrong. Last night I examined Dryden Winslow where he'd fallen on the terrace. When I was finished I went to the bathroom of 608 to wash my hands. Someone had been there ahead of me. A soiled towel was on the rack, still slightly damp. There was sand on that towel, Rudolph, and sand in the wash basin which I used."

Maclain was thoughtfully silent after Bleucher had admitted them to 1510. Under Schnucke's guidance he circled the room, lightly touching chairs and divan, still drawn up in inquisitorial array from the previous night.

A door at the west end connected the living-room and a bedroom. The captain went through it, followed by Inspector Davis. Bleucher and the sergeant stayed behind, opening the French doors to the terrace.

Davis watched without interrupting as the captain examined the bedroom, feeling the glass top of the bureau, opening and closing drawers still containing Dryden Winslow's personal belongings.

The room was not large, but obviously the murdered man had selected it in preference to those opening from the balcony above.

The captain stopped at the single bed and sat down. Beside him was a small taboret topped by a reading lamp and telephone. He fingered the silken spread and moved his hand to lamp and phone, then pressed his palm against his forehead as if to make the picture clearer.

Daylight-saving time was lingering on, but the yellow silk draperies at the window threw the room into softened shadows. Davis felt himself under a spell hardly real and difficult to analyze. It seized him grippingly, as though he were watching a strong man struggling through blackness to find some objective which no one else could see. Bleucher's voice, carefully modulated, drifted in from the other room, but the captain was lost to its sound.

"Let's play with theories again, Inspector," he began. "I'm Dryden Winslow, come from Australia to die. I've brought with me my fortune—300,000 pounds. And something else I value almost as highly. The money is safe—in a letter of credit—but the other object isn't safe. It's covered with leather—"

"Jewels," the inspector breathed.

"Hardly," the captain continued. "We mentioned that earlier this afternoon. What object could best be hidden, Inspector, between the covers of a Gideon Bible? What object affecting births, deaths and marriages—affecting the Winslow fortune? The answer's a *book,* Davis. Another Bible!"

The inspector's forehead wrinkled into deep lines. "You're right, Maclain. My God! But where is it now?"

"If you took it from this room and wanted to hide it, where would you put it?" The captain's voice was flat and hypnotic. "You have no time, Davis. You must get rid of it instantly—for there is no time, no time to take an elevator, no time to dash up service stairs—and it can't be found in your room."

"Let's go!" The inspector's feet thudded softly through the living-room. The captain left the bed and leisurely followed. Bleucher and the sergeant stepped inside from the terrace.

"Where's he gone?" Archer demanded excitedly. "What's the trouble?"

"Nothing," said Maclain. "He'll be right back."

Long seconds dragged before the inspector came in and closed the door behind him. In his hand was a limp, leather-covered book, brown and worn with age. Sergeant Archer gulped and said, "I'll be damned! Where was that?"

"Covered with sand in that urn by the elevator," the inspector explained. "The captain doped it out right under my nose."

"Please!" Maclain held out a hand for the book. Shaking it free of clinging sand, he riffled swiftly through the pages. At the back he stopped.

"There's a single page of stiffer paper at the front,

Inspector," said Maclain, "but the one at the back is missing." Lightly he ran his fingertip along the juncture of back cover and book. "It's been torn away, hasn't it?"

The inspector bent closer. "It looks like it. But why?"

The captain took a deep breath. "Because the murderer couldn't afford to have it found. Dryden Winslow's holographic will was written on that page."

"How do you know?" asked Archer quickly.

"I don't," said Duncan Maclain, "I'm only guessing. But I guessed right once before this afternoon!"

Chapter Seventeen: TWO SOFT NOTES

THE ROUTINE of Doncaster House had been badly shaken. Mrs. Colling-Sands scarcely felt a twinge of curiosity when Bleucher telephoned her shortly before supper.

"Please come to the roof and bring a spool of thread," he told her.

"Thread?" she repeated vaguely. "What color?"

"Any color, please." Bleucher became impatient, which always annoyed Mrs. Sands. "Just a spool of thread to tie a rope."

He hung up and to keep herself in the clear Mrs. Sands rifled her sewing box and tucked six spools of various shades into her handbag. She had dealt with Bleucher for a long time. The chances were better than even that if she showed up with black the manager would heatedly insist he had specified white.

She found the manager, Captain Maclain and the two members of the Homicide Squad stretched out in deck chairs enjoying a cool evening breeze which had

sprung up from the East River. Lights were beginning to pattern the city. Resolutely Mrs. Sands put from her mind the thought of the black moment when she had watched those same lights from the terrace of 608 the night before.

Doncaster House was her home; or more, it was her world. The invasion of murder had filled her with a numbness. She had carried on bravely enough, but normality would never return until the police were gone and the Winslow party along with them.

The men rose when she came up the short flight of steps from the 17th floor. The awning partition of the roof was softly lighted with bulbs along the stanchions. She glanced curiously at the coil of rope which lay on the floor beside Sergeant Archer. Bleucher accepted the spool of white thread without comment and passed it on to the inspector.

"Thank you, Mrs. Sands," said Davis. "This will do nicely."

She stepped to one side and waited. Davis's words might have been dismissal, but Mrs. Sands felt her errand entitled her to see what was going on. None of the four men openly objected, so she quietly attached herself to the party.

Under Davis's direction the sergeant uncoiled the rope and laid it out along the floor so that it was doubled once, forming a long U. Davis picked up the rope at the bottom of the U and twisted it over into a loop about a foot in diameter.

"This is my idea," he said. "Now I'll tie it in with the thread."

Maclain bent over, ran a finger along the floor until it touched the rope and traced the coil. "All right, In-

spector, go ahead; I see what you mean."

Davis knelt down and tied the rope in with two pieces of thread which he broke off short. When he attempted to pick it up the whole thing sagged.

"I'll have to tie it much more than I did," he told Maclain. "It caves in."

"I'm afraid you'll have to wind it all the way around," said the captain, grinning. "The rope's got to stay in a complete circle, you know, to be dropped over a head."

Mrs. Sands shuddered but stuck to her post. It was easier to be present than to have such things going on in the house without knowing it. It was some minutes before the inspector accomplished his purpose, but he shook his head doubtfully when he was through.

"I'm afraid you're right, Captain Maclain. It sounded like a good idea when I first thought of it—in actual practice it's not so hot."

"Let's try it anyhow," said the captain. "We may learn something even if it's not feasible."

"Where's the terrace of 1510?" the inspector asked.

Bleucher led the way to the parapet, while the captain stood motionless, listening intently. "It's just below here," said Bleucher, "but you can only see the outer edge."

"That's nothing new," declared Archer. "We knew that today. You have to swing your rope out ten feet to miss the balcony below on the sixteenth floor.

"Let's go down there where we can get a shot at it. Winslow couldn't have been seen by anyone on the roof, could he?" asked Maclain.

"Not unless he walked clear out to the edge of the terrace," said Archer.

"All right, I only wanted to make sure." The captain ordered Schnucke forward and led the way down. Wordlessly Mrs. Sands followed.

They took the service stairway to the 16th floor. On the landing concealed from the hall by the fireproof door Bleucher said, "What room are we going through to get on the balcony?"

"I suggest 1610," the captain said promptly. "That's Miss Winslow's, isn't it? Mrs. Sands can help us there, Rudolph." He turned as though looking toward the housekeeper on the stairs. "Do you mind finding out if Miss Winslow is in, Mrs. Sands? If she's there, perhaps you can persuade her to go to Miss Marcia's room for the time being. We make a rather gruesome procession."

"I'll try," said Mrs. Sands.

Fortunately Gertrude Winslow was not in. Bleucher opened the door, and they filed silently through. The French window which led to the balcony outside was small. When the four men had stepped through, the balcony was crowded. Mrs. Sands waited just inside the window, very much disliking the violation of a guest's apartment.

"The terrace is just below us now," Davis explained to the captain, "and this balcony runs all the way along this floor. You can get to several other apartments by just climbing over a railing like the one beside you."

"I felt it," said Maclain. "Rudolph, suppose you and the inspector go downstairs now while the sergeant and I stay here. Open the big French doors and wait inside until I call. Then you come out, Inspector, as Winslow might have done. We'll find out quick enough if there's any chance of that rope being slipped over your head."

Bleucher and the inspector came back inside on their way through the room. "Are you going down with us?" the manager asked.

"I'll wait here," said Mrs. Sands. "It will be better to have me here if Gertrude Winslow unexpectedly returns."

The door closed behind them and from the balcony she heard Maclain say, "Let me describe these terraces, Sergeant, as I have them pictured, and correct me if I'm wrong. The building juts out just below us, does it not? So that we are standing along the top edge of a three-sided box open at the front. The terrace of 1510 is just below us. The terrace of 1508 is on the other side of the box, not more than fifteen feet away. The bottom of the box is the terrace of 608 where Winslow struck when he fell."

"Good," said Archer. "That's pretty accurate."

"Now," said Maclain, "let me get it a little clearer. If I walked along this balcony ten feet to the left and jumped off, I'd go straight down ten floors to the terrace of 608, wouldn't I?"

"That's right," said Archer.

"If I walked on ten feet more to the left and jumped off, I'd strike on the terrace of 1508?"

"Right again."

"If I jumped off here I'd strike on the terrace of 1510?"

"Correct."

"And if I jumped off the terrace of 1510, or 1508, I'd go straight down to the sixth floor and hit on the terrace of 608?"

"What are you driving at?" the sergeant asked. "Do you think the killer stood on this balcony where we

are now, only farther along to the left?"

"He could still have done that, only he'd have had to lasso Winslow and drag him over the rail."

It was almost dark. Lights showed, spreading out in a yellow fan, from the terrace below as the French doors were thrown wide. Silence settled down tightly over Mrs. Sands. The bulk of Sergeant Archer and the slimmer form of Duncan Maclain became silhouettes outside of the window. Mrs. Sands touched her tongue to her lips and found they were dry. Desperately she forced herself to turn her head from the window and look at the hall door behind her. She knew it was opening slowly, creeping inward on well-oiled hinges. In the mirror to her left she saw the crack widen, saw the reflected light from the hall gleam dully on the harsh square angle of a heavy automatic. Then, so close it sounded almost in her ear, came soft and low a replica of the call she had heard the night before—two soft notes, the first long drawn, the second sharp and quick. She felt a scream start in her throat and choked it halfway.

The light flashed on, blinding her eyes with yellow, and through the blinding glare she saw the drawn face of Thomas Fralinger staring at her over the heavy gun in his hand.

"What was that call?" his voice was dry as dust. "Who's out there?"

Schnucke's broad head, with ears erect, poked itself into the room, followed by Maclain. "I'm sorry that I startled you, Mr. Fralinger, but I gave the call. Have you ever heard it before?"

"Never." The assistant manager pocketed the gun and wiped his forehead. "I can't say that I ever want

to hear it again."

"I've heard it before, Captain Maclain," said Mrs. Sands. "I heard it last night before Winslow was killed."

"I'm not surprised," said the captain. "That's why I gave it just now. It's the cooee call of Australia."

"You should have let me know you were coming here, Captain," said Mr. Fralinger. "One of the guests phoned down that there was someone whispering on the balcony, and with things the way they are—well—"

"Mr. Bleucher's with us," Mrs. Sands interrupted.

The sergeant stepped inside with the coiled rope hung over his arm. "That's a washout," he declared ponderously. "I still think, Captain, that Winslow jumped and broke his neck. I'll bet my job he was never hanged from up here!"

"Perhaps not from up here," Maclain agreed. "Nevertheless, he was hanged."

Chapter Eighteen: THE FRIGHTENED MAID

THE MONDAY after Dryden Winslow was killed, circumstances and a kindly heart firmly enmeshed Mrs. Colling-Sands with the destinies of the Winslow family. Her harrowing experience of Saturday night had left a scar, but the pain was tempered with unrealness. Somehow she moved outside of the circle of events. They were upsets in an ordered life, but they concerned others more than herself.

She was busy with the intricacies of a linen inventory when Carrie Ritter, the maid on the 15th floor, stepped inside the door. Mrs. Sands glanced at the clock on the linen-room wall. It showed twenty minutes before noon.

"What is it, Carrie?" Mrs. Sands asked a trifle sharp-

ly. "You know it's against the rules for you to leave your floor at this time of the day."

"I know, ma'am. Indeed, I do." The blue-uniformed maid plucked nervously at the pocket of her white apron. She was pretty in a dumpy sort of way. Under her maid's cap, which concealed overwaved hair, gentle brown eyes looked pleadingly at Mrs. Sands.

"What do you want, Carrie? You'll have to talk fast. I'm very busy." Mrs. Sands softened her tone. Carrie Ritter was inclined to be garrulous if given half a chance, yet she was a conscientious worker, and something of importance must have brought her to the linen room during working hours.

With an air which might have passed for intrigue in one less prosaic, Carrie closed the door behind her and took a step closer. "There's been murder done in this house, Mrs. Sands."

She spoke as if conveying first news of momentous importance. Mrs. Sands checked a sharp retort. She knew that hotel maids seldom approached a subject directly. They were trained to be self-effacing, working daily around people who saw them but remained unaware of their existence. They developed a type of conversation much akin to their habit of knocking discreetly before entering a suite.

Mrs. Sands knew that a wrong reply would scare Carrie away as effectively as a stentorian voice yelling, *Don't come in! Come back later!*

Carrie shifted uneasily from one foot to the other. "There's been a lot of talk about how poor Mr. Winslow was pushed off the terrace."

Mrs. Sands bent over a shelf of unused sheets to hide a smile. "I don't doubt it, Carrie. There's been entirely

too much talk, I'm sure. But it's all over now."

"Yes, ma'am," the girl agreed and began to twist at her apron again. "I was wondering if I might be transferred from the fifteenth floor."

"Oh, I see it now." Mrs. Sands straightened up. "I'm rather surprised at you, Carrie. You seem to be a sensible girl. People do die in hotels, you know. You must have been in plenty of rooms where guests have died. I can't change the whole assignment of my maids just because you get scared."

Carrie solemnly shook her head. "No indeed, ma'am, it's not that at all. It's 1507."

Mrs. Sands turned away again, remembering that Carrie had discussed Dr. Lorenzo Ynez with Dennis Riley the porter. Instantly she was interested, but she covered it with a note of coldness.

"You have been doing Doctor Ynez's apartment for a long time, Carrie. What's the matter with it now?"

"It's got me scared." Carrie blurted out. "Maybe it's my business and maybe it's not, but I thought you should know what I heard."

It was warm in the linen room with the single high-powered light bulb glowing with all the intensity of a miniature sun. Mrs. Sands abandoned the linen for a moment, took a chair and lighted a cigarette. Carrie Ritter was obviously troubled and the best thing was to hear her story.

"Sit down, Carrie," she said soothingly. "You're probably frightened about nothing, but let's have it."

The girl perched herself on the edge of a straight-backed chair and wiped her forehead with her apron.

"I was doing 1507 this morning—" She stopped, glancing cautiously at the closed door.

"You do it every morning," Mrs. Sands reminded her. "What's unusual about that?"

"It's what I heard. I'd finished the doctor's waiting-room and office and was on the balcony when they came in."

"When who came in?"

"Doctor Ynez and Mr. Holden, who's in 1509."

"I suppose you made a lot of noise," Mrs. Sands suggested sarcastically, "so they'd hear you right away."

"Indeed, ma'am," Carrie protested, "I was doing one of the bedrooms off the balcony. They were quarreling like. Pretty loud. It scared me and I didn't quite know what to do. I kept on with my work, hoping they would go into the doctor's office. That way I could slip downstairs and out without being seen."

"Besides disobeying my orders, you acted very foolishly, Carrie."

"One of them was swearing, Mrs. Sands, and honestly I couldn't help hearing what was said. I'm scared of that Doctor Ynez anyway—him and his black beard."

"You have no reason to be frightened of any of our guests."

"Indeed and why not, ma'am?" Carrie asked defiantly. "With bodies falling down all around the hotel and hearing the man yell, 'Goddam it, you better tell me what you've done with her.'"

Mrs. Sands's interest blotted out her housekeeper instincts entirely. "Who said that, Carrie?" she asked sharply.

"Mr. Holden, ma'am." The maid rushed on, feeling she had won the day. "Yelled it right loud at the doctor, and he was mad too. Then the doctor goes on smooth

as oil like, calling him 'My dear fellow.' 'You'll allow me to handle this my own way, my dear fellow,' he says. 'The lady's under a terrific nervous strain.' 'Strain, hell!' Mr. Holden yelled at him." Carrie's voice became graphically loud.

Mrs. Sands interrupted her to protest mildly. "It's not necessary to scream all the swear words at me, Carrie. I can understand them if you speak them softly."

"Well, 'strain, hell' is what he yelled," Carrie continued more mildly. " 'I'm under a strain and you are, too, with flat feet—' "

"With what?" asked Mrs. Sands.

"With flat feet, ma'am—'crawling all over the hotel, and blind men with dogs. Either I'm in this thing or I'm not, but I want to know where that woman is and I'm going to find out.' "

"Mr. Holden didn't mention anyone's name?"

"No, ma'am, but he was plenty mad and the doctor was, too, only colder like. 'You'd better trust my judgment, Mr. Holden,' he says; 'yours hasn't been so good. You've got yourself mixed up in a nasty murder.' 'No more than you,' Mr. Holden told him. They went on into the office then and I ran downstairs and out and came directly here, but I saw something in one of those rooms off the balcony."

Mrs. Sands crushed out her cigarette in a saucer on the table and thoughtfully said, "What?"

"A silk cord like might have come off a negligee. One of the rooms on the balcony is used by Miss Higgins the doctor's nurse. She keeps her uniforms there."

"Miss Higgins is away for two months on her vacation."

"That's just it, ma'am. Just what I'm trying to say.

She had six uniforms hanging up in paper bags in the closet Saturday and that blue cord wasn't on the floor. This morning there was only five uniforms in the closet and that cord was on the floor."

"Didn't you clean 1507 yesterday, Carrie?"

"Indeed I didn't, ma'am, as you'll see by my time sheet. Doctor Ynez was there all day and wouldn't let me in."

Mrs. Sands stood up in dismissal. "Didn't Doctor Ynez and Mr. Holden see you leave the room?"

"No, ma'am, I don't think so."

"You better keep quiet about this, Carrie," she advised. "Mr. Bleucher doesn't like talkative maids in Doncaster House; but more than that, you don't want to get mixed up with the police, do you?"

"The police?" The girl put her hand quickly to her breast. "Indeed, and I don't."

"Well, if you don't repeat this to anyone it will save you a lot of trouble. I may want you to talk to Captain Duncan Maclain, Mr. Bleucher's friend."

"He's the blind man, isn't he?"

"Yes. I'll let you know."

The girl started for the door and turned around. "There's another thing, Mrs. Sands," she began. "Saturday night I was on late duty on the fifteenth floor—"

She never finished what she started to say; the door of the linen room was jerked open and Bleucher stood peering angrily inside. Just in back of him stood Mr. Fralinger, who grinned and shrugged as the manager let loose a tirade.

"I've been making an inspection, Mrs. Sands, and I find no maid on the fifteenth floor."

"It's my fault," Mrs. Sands said calmly. "I sent for

her to come down here with reference to some face towels missing from the Parsons' suite. I was busy with inventory or I'd have gone upstairs myself."

"I find it most inconvenient," said Bleucher, "to have maids leave their floor during the day." He turned his broad shoulders and stalked from the linen room.

"Hurry back to your floor, Carrie," ordered Mrs. Sands. "I'll talk with you later."

Many things intervened before she thought of the girl again. Mrs. Sands never quite forgave herself for that, for when she finally went in search of Carrie Ritter the terror-stricken girl was hiding in a dark apartment, and Mrs. Sands was just in time to witness the work of the whistling hangman.

Chapter Nineteen: A STRANGE APARTMENT

MRS. COLLING-SANDS turned her passkey in the lock of 1507. With a last guilty look up and down the deserted hall of the 15th floor, she slipped quickly inside and closed the door behind her.

A pier mirror hung in the foyer. The reflection of her own face stared back at her, chalk white under her modish silver hair. The sight of it brought realization that she was about to commit the unforgivable sin of invading a guest's suite without permission. It seemed incredible that the standards of years could disintegrate completely under the touch of murder, yet her very presence in the foyer of Dr. Ynez's apartment proved it true. No moral or legal right could justify what she was about to do.

She regarded herself scornfully in the mirror, astounded that she felt no remorse; on the contrary her

heart was beating strongly with excitement.

Dr. Ynez had left the hotel 20 minutes before. From the security of the seldom-used lounge at the rear of the lobby Mrs. Sands had watched him depart. A check with Tess at the switchboard revealed that important calls could reach him at an uptown number until seven o'clock. She had two hours or more—ample time to corroborate the statements of Carrie Ritter.

The 30-foot living room was in partial obscurity, darkened by heavy shades drawn against the afternoon sun. It was furnished modernistically in a gray-and-cream motif which dominated the entire suite. A desk in one corner gave the only hint that living-room and waiting-room were combined in one.

Mrs. Sands had never entered 1507 without wondering how Dr. Lorenzo Ynez had chosen his color scheme. It was hard to picture his black-bearded bulk at ease among such feminine surroundings. Of course his patients were, for the most part, women, but one expected a touch of masculinity in a physician's equipment. Apparently Dr. Ynez considered his own great frame sufficient for the purpose.

Mrs. Sands stood for a moment looking about the room, hardly knowing where to begin. Captain Duncan Maclain, she had noticed, moved with patterned precision. She tried to conjure up a picture of his procedure under similar circumstances. It was not very helpful.

With some of her excitement dying away, the room began to look like any other room and she began to feel a trifle foolish. She climbed the short stairway to the balcony and stopped again, looking down at the vista of the room below.

It was more harmonious from above, arranged with a nice eye to line and contour. It dawned on her then that everything about Lorenzo Ynez bore the brand of conscious effect. Harshly masculine himself, he cleverly chose a setting which detracted not one whit from his personal virility. Certainly no woman living could forget for an instant the form of Lorenzo Ynez clashing against a background of gray and cream. Proof was there in the clarity with which she saw it herself. No matter how heartily she might disapprove, the picture was abnormally clear.

Mrs. Sands shook her head and started on along the balcony. The first door to her left was double locked and she passed it by. She had seen it opened and knew it contained a honeycomb of choice wines and liquors.

The second door led to the doctor's bedroom. It was open and she stepped inside. There the furnishings seemed more in accord with their owner.

The double bed was long, wide and deeply comfortable. In one corner a heavy chair under a reading lamp was flanked by a stand which held magazines, a rack of well-used pipes and a jar of tobacco.

Despite its comfort there was something lacking in the room. As she stood there looking about her she realized there was something lacking in the entire apartment. "Books," she murmured half aloud. "That's what the trouble is: the man has no books."

Feeling quite pleased with her keenness, she was still pondering about it when she left the bedroom. Doctors always had books. Their possession was almost a badge of the profession, indicating research and knowledge. It didn't hold true with Dr. Ynez. The apartment was liberally supplied with current period-

icals, but not a volume of fiction, biography or medical lore was in sight. *Perhaps he keeps them somewhere else,* she thought, not dreaming she would see the actual place before many hours had passed.

The second bedroom, where Carrie Ritter had made her find, went back to the scheme of cream and gray. Mrs. Sands had seen the austere Miss Higgins on several occasions, but apparently the trained nurse had no regular hours with her employer.

Dr. Sylvester's nurse was regular as a bookkeeper in a shoe factory arriving at nine and departing at five. Miss Higgins, the direct opposite, had her own key to 1507 and her hours were unpredictable even by the elevator boys who generally knew such things by heart.

As she thought it over, it became clear to Mrs. Sands that everything about Dr. Ynez was unpredictable. He had no office hours listed with the hotel, and his patients appeared at almost any time of the day or evening.

Although scandal never laid its clammy hand on Doncaster House, whispers had drifted through the staff that occasionally Miss Higgins departed from her day's routine as late as one or two o'clock in the morning. Mrs. Sands harked back to a remark by Mr. Fralinger: "Thank God, guests can do no wrong in apartments which lease for over five thousand a year."

There was ample evidence that the bedroom served as a dressing-room for Miss Higgins, and possibly for such patients as desired to use it. The bureau contained comb, brush and mirror reposing neatly before a row of silver-topped flagons, powder boxes, and smaller containers of rouge and cream.

Mrs. Sands passed them by disapprovingly, disgusted by the sumptuous display. No Fifth Avenue

beauty shop could have done better. She expected glass cabinets exhibiting trays of sterile instruments in a doctor's office rather than a wide choice of expensive cosmetics.

She opened the closet door and looked inside, slightly startled by the automatic light which clicked on, illuminating the interior. Carrie Ritter had given her a remarkably accurate description of its contents, but Mrs. Sands searched further, hastily investigating each of the five large paper bags draped from hangers. There was nothing but uniforms underneath.

The blue cord Carrie had spoken of was still on the floor. Mrs. Sands picked it up, ran its slim silken length through her fingers, and stood silently holding it in her hand.

It was not proving so easy to play amateur detective. She had broken every cardinal rule of the hotel business to find a cord of blue silk which might belong to any one of a hundred negligees. Its usefulness as a clue depended upon identification. That meant facing Miss Marcia again and coming once more under the scrutiny of those watchful eyes.

Perhaps the right thing was to turn the cord over to Bleucher—let the brunt of investigation fall on the manager himself. Perhaps the most sensible thing was to leave the cord on the closet floor and let events take their own course. Almost grimly she rejected the idea of involving Bleucher and of leaving the very article she had come to find. She folded it twice and was carrying it in her hand as she left the room. The cord might or might not belong to Miss Purcella Forrest. Mrs. Sands had determined to find out in the simplest way—by going direct to Miss Marcia.

She extended her leisurely search to the floor below. The desk in the corner of the living-room was unlocked. One of the drawers yielded a card file of patients—which disappointingly failed to contain the name of Purcella Forrest. Mrs. Sands closed the drawer softly and started for the adjoining room.

She paused at the door. Nontransparent shades were closely drawn, throwing the doctor's office into deep obscurity. Light which filtered in from the semi-darkened living-room showed the huge square couch in the center as a shapeless bulk.

Mrs. Sands reached for a wall switch by the door. The answering lights flooded the office with the radiance of late afternoon. They were skillfully concealed and shed a diffused, almost shadowless, glow. A second switch was set in the wall beside the first. It indicated OFF on a small black dial. Hoping to get more light, Mrs. Sands turned it.

It clicked to 1—but the result was unexpected. The room lights changed to a melancholy blue, which a second turn changed to green, and a third to fiery, disturbing red. Hastily she shut it off, glad to return to the simplicity of the twilight illumination.

An air-conditioner was installed in one of the windows. With a slight click it began to run, giving out an almost inaudible hum. A faint smell of ozone, soft and soothing, filled the air.

There were only three pieces of furniture in the room: the large couch in the center, a single, straight, upholstered chair, and a double-door cabinet.

She tried one of the doors and it opened easily, disclosing a combination radio and victrola. In a compartment above the radio was a polished wooden box about

a foot square and six inches in height.

Three hammers, similar to those of a grand piano, were mounted on top. A small electric switch was set in the front of the box. Unable to resist the temptation, Mrs. Sands clicked it on.

The three hammers began to rise and fall in rotation. As each fell it struck a chime, musical and sweet. After each third note some mechanism inside the box emitted a long, slow whistle.

It held her rigid, malignly fascinated from the moment it started. It was perfectly timed, neither too fast nor too slow: *Ding!—Dang!—Dong!—Hisssss!*—such a sound as one might make by exhaling swiftly between the teeth.

Minutes fled by as she listened to its monotonous repetition—minutes during which Dryden Winslow's murder and the blue cord in her hand were entirely out of mind. The combination of soft lights, soothing sound and ozone-impregnated air was making her sleepy. The gray silk couch, wide and deep, beckoned invitingly.

With a start she shook off the inertia induced by the persistent chime and whistle, stopping them with a touch of her finger. It left the room so quiet that the hum of the air-conditioner seemed loud. The sound of a footstep in the living-room threw her into a sudden panic.

She crumpled the cord into a ball and thrust it down the front of her dress. Dr. Ynez was standing in the door.

The doctor's opulent lips drew back, showing his white teeth in more of a snarl than a grin. He examined the room without moving his head, shifting his eyes

from side to side before he spoke.

"Ah! It's you, Mrs. Colling-Sands! I feared some marauder had broken into my apartment!"

There was no mistaking the question back of his flat statement. Mrs. Sands answered him quickly, trying to keep the tremble out of her voice.

"I was making my regular inspection, Doctor Ynez. I'm sorry if I disturbed you."

"Quite a thorough inspection, I perceive." His big head moved a fraction of an inch toward the open cabinet.

"I check everything to see that it's properly dusted, Doctor Ynez."

"I'm sure of that." He gave a deep mirthless laugh which shook his whole frame. "I trust you found everything satisfactory."

"Quite," she said, more calmly than she felt. "Carrie is a conscientious maid."

"And you a most conscientious housekeeper, Mrs. Colling-Sands. The little machine—it runs well, too, I trust. I heard it as I came in."

Mrs. Sands gave him a disarming smile. "I'm afraid my curiosity got the better of me. I must apologize. If you'll excuse me now, I must finish making my rounds."

"Ah, yes! Your rounds, to be sure." He gazed pointedly at Mrs. Sands's breast. She was uncomfortably aware that the bunched-up cord betrayed its hiding place. She took a step toward the door but he made no move to let her pass.

"There are many things in my apartment which I do not care to have disturbed," he continued silkily. "Some of them are dangerous. The little machine, for example, is a sleep producer. Without proper super-

vision those who come under its influence might never awake. It would be terrible, Mrs. Colling-Sands, for one as attractive as yourself to sleep forever. I trust you understand what I mean."

"Perfectly, I'm sure," said a voice from the living-room.

Ynez swung furiously around to face Mr. Fralinger. "What's the meaning of invading my suite in this way?" he demanded, his voice shaking with rage.

"I'm sorry." The assistant manager looked the doctor over from beard to boots and favored him with a mocking smile. "I was making my daily rounds, Doctor Ynez. I thought you were out."

A vein jutted out at the side of Dr. Ynez's black hair. "I'll thank you both to leave," he said in a calmer tone. "Perhaps I'll have to have a special lock put on my door to guard against intrusion."

"It can be arranged," said Mr. Fralinger. "I have a message for you, Mrs. Sands. Are you coming?"

Grateful for the chance, she stepped wordlessly by the doctor and followed the assistant manager to the foyer. She was almost to the door when Dr. Ynez called from the living-room: "One moment, please, Mrs. Sands."

Mr. Fralinger stood waiting in the hall as she stepped back into the room.

"It will save you a lot of trouble," said Ynez very softly, "to know that the cord I saw you hide as I came in is the property of one of my patients—Miss Purcella Forrest." He bowed stiffly from the waist. "I believe that's what you wanted to know. It was left here several weeks ago—when she took a massage treatment from my nurse Miss Higgins."

Chapter Twenty: TIES OF BLOOD

EMMETT BLACK leaned over from the back seat of the sedan and touched Baxter Winslow on the shoulder.

"Pull up at the next decent-looking place you come to, Bax. I think all of us could do with a spot. That undertaker's place was beastly. The marble—the statues—and the ferns. Ugh!"

He leaned back and turned to look at Gertrude Winslow beside him. Her head was back, and her long-lashed eyes were closed. A breeze from the window beside her touched her curly hair, flattening it out and releasing it again to spring back into place with dancing lights.

Emmett had adored her since childhood. As he grew older he realized his devotion was more than cousinly affection. Gertrude was different from Baxter; stronger somehow, and more dominant—serious one moment, hilariously happy the next. She had bossed the three of them at work and at play, militantly protecting the affable Rose from Emmett and Baxter; always ready to take the blame upon herself for any childish scrapes.

He patted her hand and said, "As usual, Gertrude, the brunt of this whole thing seems to have fallen on you."

Rose Black twisted half around from her place in the front seat beside Baxter. "I know I should feel much worse than I do," she admitted. "Somehow I can't get close to it at all. It's been dreadfully exciting, and all that sort of thing—but it's like a show to me. I can't realize it was my uncle—or your father. I certainly can't realize he was murdered."

Gertrude opened her eyes and smiled. "Nor can I, Rose. When I looked at him in the funeral parlor he seemed like a stranger. I tried to remember he was my father—but I couldn't. It's all so incredible—so utterly impossible. Who in heaven's name could have killed him?"

"It's obvious, isn't it?" Baxter slowed down the car. "None of us have ever seen him. We know nothing whatever about him—except that he failed in business here years ago and made a lot more money in Australia."

"How do we know that?" asked Rose. "We've heard nothing about it. Has it occurred to you that none of us may have a penny?"

"That's a jolly thought! My Oxford education has trained me to be an excellent bowler and a first-class oarsman!"

"Maybe you can get a job as a lifeguard," Baxter suggested grimly. "You're a good swimmer, too."

"And the obvious murderer—who was he?"

"Someone from Australia, Rose. If he did make a lot of money he undoubtedly made enemies along with it. One of them must have followed him here and killed him."

"But he made money in this country, too, Baxter," Gertrude reminded.

"Too long ago, what?" said Emmett softly. "I see what you mean, Bax."

"That's it exactly. That Count of Monte Cristo stuff is good in the pictures—but nobody kills a man for something that happened twenty-five years before." Baxter turned the car from the road and stopped under the portico of a rambling old inn.

Rose gave it an approving glance and asked, "Where are we?"

"Thirty minutes from New York, in the wilds of New Jersey," Baxter told her as he locked the car, "but don't worry, my sweet; the police know where to find us. They've trailed us from Doncaster House to the undertaker's, and from there here." He pointed to a Ford sedan which passed slowly by. "They'll be waiting to escort us home again when we come out!"

Several couples were dancing to the music of a huge concert phonograph with an endless appetite for nickels. They found a table at the rear of the airy dance floor, and after the second highball Baxter said, "I'm sure there's something indecent about it but I want to dance. What do you say, Gertrude?"

"Take Rose. I'm not being pious—just tired. I'd rather sit here and dabble at my ice."

"I'll keep her company," Emmett volunteered.

He watched his sister and Baxter swing out onto the floor, then turned seriously to Gertrude. "How did you get rid of the Holden chap?"

"Rid of him?" Gertrude colored faintly. "What do you mean?"

Emmett leaned closer, his cigarette sending up a line of blue smoke from between his fingers. "This afternoon. He's a bit of a pest, what?—a dancer of constant attendance."

Gertrude folded her arms on the table and studied Emmett's face. The usual hint of mockery was missing from his dark eyes. He pushed back his wavy hair with a quick uneasy gesture, waiting for her reply.

"Don't tell me the debonair Emmett Black is becoming protective. Why should my marriage to Paul

Holden annoy you?"

"Annoy me!" he said fiercely, "it enrages me. The man's a clothing dummy. A stuffed shirt. He has no more blood in him than a sawdust monkey. Furthermore, I don't believe he's real!"

"I'm peculiarly dense today, Emmett. Again I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to explain."

Her voice was cold, but it was the coldness of doubt, not anger. Emmett was bluntly putting her own fears into words. There were moments during the past few months when Paul Holden's possessiveness had goaded her into fury.

Looking back, she could hardly remember his proposal. In fact, it was doubtful if he had proposed. In his own sophisticated way he had taken her silence for acquiescence. The eager delight of the Forrest sisters had much to do with it too.

To them Paul Holden was the perfect marriage, and it helped to influence Gertrude's decision. She could not bear to blast their happiness; see disappointment creep over their kindly faces. It would be a shocking blow to Marcia and Purcella if the match were broken off. Gertrude had carefully concealed from them the flaws in their aristocratic idol. Now Emmett was proving more difficult.

"Where did you meet him?" he asked bluntly. "What do you know about him? His honorable title —and his Order of the British Empire?"

"I met him at the Richeleys' apartment at a cocktail party. He was an official in one of the colonies—India or Australia."

"They're a long way apart. Isn't he sure which one?"

"I'm not in the habit of prying into my friends' af-

fairs."

Baxter and Rose stopped by the table while the machine was changing records. "You two look frightfully intense," Rose remarked lightly. "What is it—a tiff?"

"We're talking of Paul Holden," Emmett told her.

Baxter gulped part of his drink without sitting down. "Come on, Rose. I'd rather dance."

"You see, Gertrude," Emmett went on pleadingly when his sister had gone, "Baxter doesn't like Holden either. You say you don't pry into the personal affairs of your friends. That's a bit thick, isn't it, when you're going to marry the chap? You need warmth, love, affection—gaiety and passion. You'll die without them. So far I've seen none of them in the Honorable Paul Holden, O.B.E."

The record was playing a waltz, full and deep. Under its spell Gertrude felt her heart was racing high. Discomposed at an emotion she had never felt before, she drew slightly away from the man beside her. "You sound as if you were jealous!"

She realized it was silly and banal as soon as she said it, but the effect on Emmett Black was startling. He flushed deeply and gazed at her with suffering eyes from which all reticence had gone.

"We've played with fire since we were children, Gertrude." His voice was husky and warm. "Always one cursed barrier has stood in our way—the barrier of blood. I've damned it to eternity—for you've never been a cousin to me. Now, before it's too late, I want you to know I love you."

"Emmett, you can't!"

Intently he watched her pale, watched the rise and fall of her firm young breasts. There was no loathing

in her eyes, only unhappiness, deep and insurmountable.

"Gertrude!" He leaned still closer. "I should never have spoken, except, my dear, we have a chance. Once, as a child, I overheard something. It meant nothing to me then. It's life to me now. I can't tell you what it is—unless I know you love me too."

"Go on." She spoke through colorless lips which scarcely moved.

"Dryden Winslow was my mother's brother—but once I heard the Carruthers say that you were not his daughter, that you were adopted when a baby. Aunt Marcia and Aunt Purcella will know the truth." He stopped and wiped his forehead, which was glistening wet. "Whatever the truth is, my darling, you must never marry Paul Holden. He may be English, as he claims, but I doubt it. It's nearer the truth that he has been to Australia—nearer the truth that the blood of Dryden Winslow is on his hands!"

Chapter Twenty-one: THE SISTER

MRS. SANDS found Dr. Sylvester waiting for her in Marcia Forrest's room. The doctor smiled and greeted her with amiable professionalism, saying in a whisper as she entered the door, "I've ordered Miss Forrest to bed. Ahem—nothing serious. She needs a night of rest and quiet."

Mrs. Sands, still chafing from a recent encounter with Dr. Ynez, was irritated at physicians in general. "Why did you send for me?" she asked, lowering her voice to meet the doctor's. "Surely there are plenty of nurses available if Miss Forrest is ill."

"But I didn't," the doctor protested. "That is—not personally. Miss Forrest asked if I could get you to sit with her a while. She's nervous and upset, and I thought it was wise."

Mrs. Sands sighed resignedly and followed him into the room. She was tired, and longing to bathe and dress for dinner, but secretly she welcomed the opportunity to be alone with Marcia Forrest. There were a few things she wanted to know about the blue silk cord tucked safely in the bosom of her dress. Dr. Lorenzo Ynez's explanation that Purcella Forrest had left it in his office some time before was entirely too pat.

"Here's Mrs. Sands now," said Dr. Sylvester with a bright air of having produced her out of a hat. "If you want anything further, don't hesitate to call me, Miss Forrest. I'm sending up some medicine from the drugstore. But above all, my dear lady, I want you to relax."

He gave a jerky nod of his head and was gone, leaving Mrs. Sands with increasing wonderment at her own ability to hate people who used the odious term *my dear lady.*

Miss Marcia was propped up in bed, exhibiting part of the dripping negligee Mrs. Sands had seen on Saturday night. Obviously the physician's advice to relax had gone unheeded. Miss Marcia did not look distraught or worried, but she was tense and stiff in every line, as though facing some task which she needed every ounce of energy to perform.

When the door clicked shut behind the doctor, she fumbled for a cigarette in a box beside the bed, lighted it and gave a slight cough. Mrs. Sands switched off the ceiling lights and sat down, watching Miss Marcia in the glow of the reading lamp which struck her face

and shoulders.

The elder Forrest sister was a strange composite picture of two generations. Modishly dressed hair, make-up and casual smoking never quite hid the simple severity of the Gay Nineties which lingered on in Marcia Forrest. Sophisticated and well bred, she unconsciously conveyed a Victorian impression.

Mrs. Sands would have sworn that Marcia Forrest was constantly shocked at her own temerity; startled at being alive in the fast, frivolous world of 1937.

Miss Marcia smoked rapidly for a moment, seeking an opening. When her cigarette was half consumed, she crushed it in the tray, breaking it open, and said without preamble, "Undoubtedly you are wondering why I asked you to come. The doctor's a fool, but you're very clever. You know I sent for him to get you here."

It was unexpected, and Mrs. Sands would have liked sufficient time to frame a reply. She crossed her legs, swinging a shapely, silken-clad ankle, and said, "Why?"

"I had to have someone to talk to—someone I can trust. Above all, someone who's discreet."

"Thank you." Mrs. Sands kept her steady gray eyes fixed on Marcia Forrest's face. "I feel quite flattered, Miss Forrest, and more than a little surprised. You saw me first Friday."

"But we've been under fire together since then." Miss Marcia hitched herself up farther in the bed. "It draws people close together, Mrs. Colling-Sands—enables them to judge each other—oftentimes more clearly than by years of contact. Your position in this hotel proves you a woman of responsibility." Her voice broke slightly. "With my sister gone, I'm desperate for such a friend."

"There's your niece, Miss Winslow."

"She's a child." Two small fine lines appeared between Miss Marcia's eyes. She took her pince-nez from the table beside her and put them on. "Have you ever been utterly friendless, Mrs. Sands? And very much alone—faced by a responsibility too great for you to bear?"

"Perhaps not exactly that, but I think I understand." Mrs. Sands's tone was warmly sympathetic. "I'll do everything I can to help."

Miss Marcia drew a quick short breath and leaned back on her pillows again. "You had seen Purcella before Saturday, hadn't you?"

Mrs. Sands shook her head. "Never."

"That's strange. Purcella was certain you had. She has seen you. She's been coming to the hotel for some time as a patient of Doctor Ynez."

"I'd heard so from the servants," Mrs. Sands said quickly.

The furtive glances of the Forrest sisters were suddenly explained. Yet one thing was not clear. Those glances had occurred before—before Dryden Winslow was killed. For some reason Miss Purcella had hoped that her visits to Dr. Ynez were not known.

Color drained away from Miss Marcia's face, leaving it granite hard. "Does Captain Maclain know that Purcella was coming here?"

"I'm afraid he does." Mrs. Sands sat up straighter in her chair and took the blue silk cord from the bosom of her dress.

"Where did you get that?" Miss Marcia's pallor increased until Mrs. Sands feared a repetition of Saturday night's collapse.

"Let me get you some water," she said hastily, "and I'll tell you. It's your sister's, isn't it?"

Miss Marcia nodded mutely.

When Mrs. Sands returned from the bathroom with a glass of water Miss Marcia touched it to her lips and patted them dry with the edge of the sheet.

"You haven't told me where you found it."

"Did your sister wear this Saturday night?"

Again Miss Marcia nodded. Mrs. Sands draped the cord over the foot of the bed.

"I want to help you, Miss Forrest," she said sadly. "I really do. But without full knowledge of what I'm doing, I'm afraid. Somehow it's hard to keep in my mind the fact that Dryden Winslow was killed—and that the person who killed him may still be here—in Doncaster House. I found this cord in Doctor Ynez's apartment less than an hour ago. Unfortunately, he came in while I was there. He knows I have it, but he said your sister left it while taking a massage from Miss Higgins on a previous visit. I also found out how your sister left the hotel Saturday night."

"You know?" Miss Marcia covered her mouth with the back of her hand.

"I believe I do," Mrs. Sands continued. "Doctor Ynez telephoned for his car shortly after we left 1510. A little later he walked through the lobby with Miss Higgins, his nurse, and drove away. The clerk on duty saw him, the policeman on the door saw him—and no one recognized Miss Purcella in the nurse's uniform which she wore!"

"It was mad and foolish, I know," said Miss Marcia. "Please try and understand. There are two people in the world I love. Gertrude and Purcella. Baxter is dear

to me, but not in the same way. For several months now Purcella has been ill—not herself at all. She has been under Doctor Ynez's care. She was upset over Dryden's coming. The murder and the attendant questioning broke her down completely. I sent for Doctor Ynez, and he told me instantly I had to get her away—out of this hotel, Mrs. Sands; out of the hell we have been put through since Saturday night."

Miss Marcia removed the pince-nez and dabbed at her eyes with a tiny handkerchief. When she spoke again her voice was so low Mrs. Sands bent forward to catch the words.

"There was danger, Mrs. Sands, terrible danger—that my sister might lose her mind! No one must find out where she is and question her again. I don't dare phone her and don't dare go to see her, for the police are watching our entire family."

"And you know where she is?"

"Certainly. That's why I want your help. She's in Doctor Ynez's nursing home on Riverside Drive. I want you to take a message to her. There's a card in my top right-hand bureau drawer which will get you in. Will you go? Tonight?"

Mrs. Sands went to the bureau, opened the drawer and took out a small plain card engraved with the words, *Riverview Home, 116th Street and Riverside Drive.* Holding it in her hand, she turned and looked at Miss Marcia's haggard, worried face. "I'll go."

Chapter Twenty-two: AN UNGRACIOUS RECEPTION

IT WAS AFTER SEVEN by the time Mrs. Sands had bathed and dressed. Mr. Fralinger was having a cigarette with

his coffee when she reached the table. He lingered a few moments to talk with her before going to his office.

"You look like a conspirator, and I feel like one," he said, hiding a grin behind his napkin. "What did the beautiful antique want with you? Or is it a state secret?"

Mrs. Sands ordered a salad and iced coffee before she replied. Her appetite was usually of the best, but it had fled since Saturday night. She was finding it difficult to linger over a meal, difficult to sit still for any length of time, even in her own room.

She countered Mr. Fralinger with a question of her own. "How did you know I was in Doctor Ynez's apartment this afternoon?"

"Detective work of my own." The cleft of his chin deepened. "Sylvester tried to get in touch with you and couldn't find you, so Tess asked me if I knew where you were. I put our talk at Captain Maclain's together with womanly curiosity, and it added up to 1507. What did you find?"

The waiter placed her salad on the table and gave her time to think. She needed an ally, and the assistant manager could be counted upon not to talk. Moreover, she was not sure how much Mr. Fralinger already knew. It was quite possible he had overheard Dr. Ynez's remark about Miss Purcella's cord.

She decided on a halfway measure, determining to keep Miss Marcia's disclosure a secret. "I found a blue silk cord which belonged to Miss Purcella."

"How did you know it was there?" he asked. "You didn't stumble on it by accident, I'm sure."

"No," she admitted, "I didn't. Carrie Ritter the maid told me it was in the closet of the balcony bedroom. But Ynez spiked my guns. He admitted it was Purcella's,

but said she had left it there several weeks ago."

"And what did Miss Marcia say?" Mr. Fralinger placed the stub of his cigarette in the saucer and put it out with a teaspoonful of coffee. "Did you ask her if Miss Purcella had it on Saturday night when she disappeared?"

Mrs. Sands evaded again. "I'm sure she did," she said guilelessly. "In fact, I believe Miss Marcia and Doctor Ynez fixed it up to get Miss Purcella out of the hotel. Ynez left here with his nurse late Saturday night. I think that nurse was Purcella Forrest."

"By Jove!" Fralinger exclaimed, drumming on the table with his finger tips. "I believe you've hit it, Mrs. Sands! But there's something that interests me more than Purcella Forrest. I'd like to know where Doctor Ynez was at ten o'clock Saturday night!"

"I know where he was just before ten. He came out of his apartment just as I went into 1508. And there was someone else in the apartment with him at that time, I'm sure."

Mr. Fralinger stood up. "I suppose that gives him an alibi, if he can produce the other person. For my part, he'll need it to convince me that he doesn't know plenty about Dryden Winslow's death."

"From what I saw of him this afternoon," said Mrs. Sands, "even then I wouldn't be too sure."

She had changed to a dark silk dress when she left Doncaster House 30 minutes later. She walked swiftly west toward Fifth Avenue. As she stood on the corner waiting for a bus which would take her up Riverside Drive, she glanced back at the hotel's terraced façade.

It was not quite dark, and the lights that were on showed dull yellow. Later they would glow brightly,

clean-cut against the blackness of the walls.

The evening was hot and there were few people on 54th Street; but, remembering Miss Marcia's injunction about the police, she decided to make sure she was not being followed. She crossed Fifth Avenue, walked up the west side of the street to 56th, and there turned west again. A short distance from Fifth Avenue she went into a drugstore which connected with the Heckscher Building.

Inside she purchased a package of cigarettes, came out into the Heckscher Building, and walked through to another entrance which opened on 57th Street. She saw by then that no one was trailing her.

She crossed 57th Street just in time to catch a Riverside Drive bus. On the top of the bus she lighted a cigarette and felt in her bag to make sure the letter Miss Marcia had given her was there.

She was acting impulsively and was well aware of it. Try as she might, she could not picture the Forrest sisters mixed up with anything which would not stand the closest investigation.

Still she was not quite satisfied. Lorenzo Ynez was marked with unscrupulousness; and he had persuaded the Forrest sisters to withhold information from the police. Miss Marcia's explanation could not be as simple as it seemed. Miss Marcia might have told the whole truth—might have been entirely frank and honest; that still failed to explain Lorenzo Ynez's part in Miss Purcella's flight. Where the doctor was concerned, Mrs. Sands was inclined to look deeply for unfathomable motives.

By the time the bus reached 116th Street she was heartily regretting her part in the affair.

She might have missed the Riverview Home entirely had it not been for a small brass plate beside the door. It was a relic of the days when sumptuous homes dotted the Drive, a five-story marble-vestibuled house, slightly gone to seed. A single light shone behind red-draped grille doors. Mrs. Sands considered it rather too bawdy for a nursing home and consulted the brass plate again to make sure she was right before ringing.

She felt better when her summons was answered by a long-nosed, thin-faced woman in cap and stiff-starched white.

She made no move to usher Mrs. Sands inside but stood rigidly in the doorway, gazing out with forbidding beady eyes.

Mrs. Sands swallowed nervously and said, "I've come to see a patient—Miss Purcella Forrest. I have a letter for her. Is she here?"

"I'm sure I can't say." The nurse wet thin lips and started to close the door. "We admit no visitors, anyhow, without the doctor's permission."

"But I have the doctor's permission!" Mrs. Sands stepped slightly forward and extended the card. The nurse took it from her and held it inside to get a better light.

"You can leave the letter with me," she said, returning the card. "I'll see that it's delivered."

"I'll see that it's delivered," Mrs. Sands persisted firmly. "That card was given to me as permission to see Miss Forrest in the Riverview Home. I intend to see her."

"Very well," the nurse said unemotionally. "Step inside."

Mrs. Sands followed her ungracious guide across a

book-lined reception room, furnished only with a desk which held the shaded light. *So this is where he keeps his books,* she thought. *I was sure he had another office somewhere—1507 is more showroom than doctor's study.* A small automatic lift, which had served the private home in former years, carried them noisily to the third floor.

The nurse led the way down a heavily carpeted hall and opened a door. Her voice was more pleasant when she said, "There's someone here to see you, Miss Forrest."

She waited until Mrs. Sands was inside, then closed the door behind her. In a moment the noisy elevator announced that she was on her way downstairs.

The room was a pleasant surprise—spacious and cool, with cheerful chintz chairs and a wide brass bed —but Mrs. Sands caught her breath sharply at the sight of Miss Purcella.

Her eager smile of welcome added to her frailness, touching her face with the ethereal look of an invalid child. She was seated in a wide wicker chair, her dainty feet, in pomponed mules, propped on a cushioned hassock before her. When she turned her head from gazing out the window at the flashing lights on the New Jersey shore, a lamp by her chair caught the deep-drawn shadows of her face, turning them into pinched and haggard lines.

Her blue eyes were questioning, but she said simply, "Mrs. Colling-Sands. I'm glad you've come."

"I brought a letter from your sister." Mrs. Sands took a chair and drew it close, groping for the right words to say.

"You think I'm very foolish, don't you?" said Pur-

cella as she slipped a delicate finger under the flap, tore it loose and took out the folded sheet of paper.

"No, I don't believe I do," Mrs. Sands declared. "You're ill. And there's been a terrible strain. You're entitled to rest and privacy."

"Privacy," Miss Purcella repeated, unfolding the sheet of paper. "That's easy to get—isn't it?—but rest is harder to find."

She reached for her pince-nez with the same familiar gesture her sister had used such a short time before. Mrs. Sands sat silently waiting until the letter was finished, returned to the envelope and slipped between the leaves of a magazine which lay on the floor by the chair.

Miss Purcella folded her hands in her lap and leaned back as though the effort of reading had tired her severely. "Marcia says you're our friend. Perhaps she's already told you that we need one." She closed her eyes and was silent. All the noise of traffic drifted up from the Drive below. From the hallway came another sound; the clanking of the automatic lift, in action once again. Miss Purcella opened her eyes, showing startled fear in their light blue depths.

"It's the elevator," Mrs. Sands said soothingly, but she was not entirely at ease. Miss Purcella's apprehension was contagious. Mentally she was counting the progress of the creeping lift, wondering where it would stop, and what message or visitor it was bringing to other patients in the nursing home of Dr. Lorenzo Ynez.

She began to understand some of the fear which had driven the frail Purcella into flight from the realities of murder and police. Footsteps sounded in the hall

and Mrs. Sands was rigid when the long-nosed nurse stepped inside the door. Suddenly she relaxed in the chair, limp with unaccountable relief.

The large gray head of a dog, with pointed ears and almond-shaped eyes, had pushed past the white starched skirt. The nurse drew hastily away.

"Walk right on in," she said nastily and turned toward Miss Purcella. "Another visitor to see you. With a dog this time. I couldn't keep him out. He says his name's Captain Duncan Maclain."

Chapter Twenty-three: SHE PAID AND PAID

If Duncan Maclain felt any surprise at the presence of Mrs. Colling-Sands he failed to show it. His manner was courteous and affable—casual as that of the dog, who stretched herself out at his side when he was seated. His rare poise and singular ability to put people at their ease were never more apparent. His greeting was as informal as though he had just dropped in for tea.

It was some moments, however, before a feeling of guiltiness left Mrs. Sands. She had agreed to help Duncan Maclain. Instead, her very first act had been to withhold important information at the request of Marcia Forrest. It was no fault of Mrs. Colling-Sands that the captain had discovered Miss Purcella's retreat.

Mrs. Sands hoped he would explain how he had found Riverview Home. If he remained silent the Forrest sisters would always think he had learned the address from her.

She was relieved when he leaned back in his chair, idly scratched Schnucke's head and said, "I'm glad I

found you here, Mrs. Sands. Apparently we've worked along the same lines. Anyhow, the results are the same —a friendly call on Miss Purcella."

"My sister asked her to come," Miss Purcella explained. "You can't attach any blame to Mrs. Sands. I had to get away from the police. My doctor advised it—but it's most awkward. None of my family dare communicate with me because they are being constantly followed. Mrs. Sands kindly brought me a letter from my sister. I'm being frank with you, Captain Maclain. Please be frank with me. How did you find this place—and why did you come here?"

The captain was silent, running his forefinger along a pattern in the arm of his chair.

"I'll be glad to leave," said Mrs. Sands, "if you want to talk to Miss Forrest alone."

"You'll do me a favor by staying—unless the captain objects."

"It isn't that at all. I want you here, too, Mrs. Sands." The captain abandoned his pattern tracing, crossed his legs and clasped his hands around one knee. "I'm trying to answer your question, Miss Purcella—as to why I came. Perhaps the main reason was to let you know that Dryden Winslow left an estate of 300,000 pounds sterling."

Miss Purcella's slim hands closed with such intensity on the arms of her chair that the wicker creaked under the pressure. "You found his will?"

Maclain shook his head. "We didn't—unfortunately. It might clear up several things—among them who killed him. There was a letter of credit for 300,000 pounds among his effects. The police kept it quiet until today for some obscure reason. Now they've decided

the family can be told."

"It seems so foolish, Captain Maclain. I mean, for him to bring all that money with him. He was so close to death. What could he have intended to do?"

"What any man close to death might do, Miss Purcella—if he wanted to settle an involved estate in his own way without a legal battle. He intended to distribute that 300,000 pounds among his heirs before he died."

"You mean he intended to leave someone out of his will! Someone rightfully entitled to a share!" Primitive hate had crept into each of Miss Purcella's deliberate words. Mrs. Sands wondered if Duncan Maclain felt it as strongly as she.

"I believe what I said is the truth, Miss Forrest." Maclain shifted his position slightly. "The murderer took a quick, fast way to stop that distribution—killing Winslow and stealing the will—for the murderer was in Dryden Winslow's apartment shortly after Dryden Winslow was killed."

Miss Purcella shriveled under Mrs. Sands's eyes. "Oh, God!" she moaned. "Merciful God!" It was the whimpering cry of a wounded animal. "I see now what you're trying to do. You've found out that Gertrude was not really his child—but you're wrong, Captain Maclain—and the police are wrong. Gertrude's lovable—sweet! She wouldn't hurt a fly for all the money in the world!"

"Please! Miss Purcella!" Maclain's commanding tone checked the outburst. Miss Purcella sank back shivering with exhaustion but still anxiously watching the captain.

Mrs. Sands suppressed a terrific desire to take the trembling Purcella in her arms. Something in Maclain's

manner held her in check. She was keen enough to sense that the captain was playing a carefully planned game. She dared not interfere.

"You're needlessly upsetting yourself," Maclain went on firmly. "Neither I nor the police have connected Miss Winslow with this murder in any way. What made you think we had?"

Miss Purcella ceased trembling and turned her head away to look out of the window over the black expanse of the Hudson River. "I trust you both," she said without any affectation. "The time has come to tell the truth. Dryden Winslow is dead. Whatever I say now can do no harm. Gertrude Winslow's mother died in childbirth. Marcia and I have reared the child since the day she was born—although Dryden Winslow adopted her when she was one year old."

Miss Purcella stopped, and Maclain asked, "Why?"

She turned back slowly to look from Mrs. Sands to the captain as if seeking assurance. "That's the secret Marcia and I have kept for over twenty years." Her voice was flat and hard. "He was a man with a strange sense of duty—in some directions. He adopted Gertrude because he thought she was his own child—the result of a passing affair with a woman beneath him. Only Marcia and I knew the truth: that Gertrude's real father was killed in an accident before the child was born; that Gertrude's real mother accepted Dryden Winslow's importunities, hoping she could trick him into marriage, which would make her unborn babe secure.

"For more than twenty years we've guarded that secret, Captain Maclain. Guarded it from Baxter and Gertrude. Guarded it from Dryden Winslow, who

would have stopped her support and cut her off without a penny, had he known the truth. Guarded it from the world—until there were days I thought my heart would burst with deceit!"

"You're a brave woman, Purcella Forrest," the captain said gently. "Mrs. Sands and I will guard your secret as faithfully as you have done. But is it necesasry now? Gertrude Winslow is legally adopted. I found that out today through Pryne, Hoskings and Keeler—the attorneys who acted for Mr. Winslow when his brokerage house failed."

"The deceit was ended before you came, Captain." Miss Purcella smiled wanly. "Subterfuge of any kind is doubly cruel because it's so hopeless. Emmett Black overheard as a child that Gertrude was an adopted daughter. He didn't know, of course, that Dryden Winslow adopted her, thinking she was his own. Late this afternoon Emmett and Gertrude asked Marcia for the truth. They've been in love for years. Marcia refused to give permission to their marriage—and a breaking off with Paul Holden—until she communicated with me. That was the contents of the letter brought by Mrs. Sands. I'll feel better now if you tell me what *you* already know."

"Not as much as I'd like to, Miss Purcella." The captain unclasped his hands and flexed his fingers. "Through Pryne, Hoskings and Keeler I found the solicitors in Melbourne who handled Winslow's affairs. I've been in touch with them by phone.

"It was they who told me he intended to distribute his estate before he died. He mentioned a holographic will—a safeguard in the event he died en route or before the distribution could be made."

"They have no idea of its whereabouts?"

"None, Miss Purcella," Maclain answered gravely. "I'm afraid it's been destroyed. I have additional important information from the Australian police. Dryden Winslow has a wife in Sydney."

"A wife? Living now?" Well-manicured nails bit into Miss Purcella's soft palms.

"He married shortly after he left this country—a woman named Amy Flecker. Did you ever hear of her?"

"Never in my life."

"It's ironical, in view of what you've just told me. He discovered shortly after his marriage that she had an illegitimate child—six or seven years old. He never lived with her after that discovery—and consistently refused to divorce her. She was a thoroughly bad lot from what I can learn. She furnished an excellent motive, Miss Forrest, for Winslow's plan to give his fortune away before his death."

Miss Purcella put her feet on the floor and sat up straight in her chair. "You know that to be true, Captain Maclain?"

"I knew it to be true before I heard from the Australian police. Yesterday evening I found the Fleckner family Bible which was taken from Winslow's room. In it was entered the birth of Amy Fleckner's illegitimate child. Following that was a record of her marriage to Dryden Winslow."

"I've been a very foolish woman, Captain Maclain!" Miss Purcella's voice was stronger, her cheeks delicately colored. "I've paid and paid for a silence I didn't need—"

"Wait!" Maclain raised one hand in interruption. "I

hear someone coming down the hall."

Mrs. Sands swung toward the door just as it was flung wide and Dr. Lorenzo Ynez stepped inside. His beard bristled blackly against the white shirt front of his evening clothes. He ignored the captain and Mrs. Sands, fixing his piercing reddish eyes on Miss Purcella. Mrs. Sands saw her shrink back into the chair under his gaze. She was limp as a wilted flower.

"You were not to have visitors, Miss Forrest." His voice was warm and soothingly low. "They must leave immediately. Their presence here is most dangerous to your health."

"Miss Forrest seems quite well to me," the captain declared in a metallic tone.

"Perhaps, as her physician, you will allow me to judge! I must ask you and Mrs. Colling-Sands to leave without delay. This is a hospital—not a hotel!"

"Gladly, Doctor Ynez." The captain stood up and Mrs. Sands followed suit. "I'll leave immediately—if Miss Forrest wishes me to do so. However, she started to tell me something just as you came in. I would like to hear the rest before I go."

"Please go now," Miss Purcella said feebly from the depths of the wicker chair. "I'm sorry, Captain Maclain, but I have nothing more to say."

Speeding down Riverside Drive in Duncan Maclain's sedan with Cappo at the wheel, Mrs. Sands recounted her experience of the afternoon while searching Ynez's suite. The captain listened carefully, thoughtfully smoking. She concluded her recital with a question: "How did you find Riverview Home?"

The captain smiled. "Through the phone book. Doc-

tor Ynez is listed at Doncaster House. He thoughtfully provides another number to call if there is no answer. Rena called it and asked for Miss Forrest. The nurse said she was unable to come to the phone. Rena traced the address of the second number through the phone company."

"But how did you know Miss Purcella was there?"

"It seemed the natural place for her to go. She was under Ynez's care—and I was certain he had arranged for her to leave the hotel. So were the police. The family wasn't worried enough for the disappearance to be real."

"Do you think she told us the truth?"

"All but one thing." The captain pursed his lips. "Gertrude Winslow's mother isn't dead. We just left her at the Riverview Home."

"That's what she was going to tell you when Ynez arrived?" Mrs. Sands's voice was sympathetic. "That's what she meant when she spoke of having paid!"

"I'm afraid that's not quite right, either, Mrs. Sands." The captain put out his cigarette in the ash tray at the side of the car. "Miss Purcella was speaking of money when she said she paid for silence. Doncaster House has been the scene of another crime—one which Inspector Davis dislikes even more than murder, because it's even harder to handle. Unquestionably she's paid and paid. She's in the hands of the cleverest blackmailer it's ever been my misfortune to meet!"

Chapter Twenty-four: A SOUL-CUTTING SOUND

A LARGE ROUND MOON was hanging over the East River, competing vainly against the New York lights, when

Mrs. Sands left Duncan Maclain's sedan in front of the hotel.

As the car rolled silently away, she stood under the bronze-and-glass canopy looking up at the silver ball which seemed so much out of place in the city. Its home was properly over the Thames, lighting the green of England's fields. In New York its brightness dimmed, battering against sky-high steel, already bright with a million candles powered by motors below.

An unobtrusive man was leaning against the side of the hotel, farther down the street. She saw him watching her and wrenched herself back from lunar dreaming with a nostalgic sigh.

The clock over the desk showed 10:30 when she entered the lobby. Two couples were standing at the desk when she came in; the Dwights, who occupied 420, and another couple whom Mrs. Sands did not know. Mr. Dwight was cashing a check and joking with the clerk in a key which indicated a convivial dinner not long over.

The clerk signaled her discreetly and she passed hurriedly through the lobby to wait in the deserted lounge at the rear until the Dwights had gone.

"There's a note in your box, Mrs. Sands," the clerk said when she approached the desk. She smiled her thanks, took the unaddressed envelope and opened it in the elevator as she gave her floor.

It contained a single line, written in smudged pencil: *Mrs. Sands, I got to see you please.* It was signed *Carrie Ritter.*

There was a tightness in her throat when she told the boy, "Take me on up to the fifteenth floor."

She had entirely forgotten her talk with Carrie and

her casual promise to see the maid later in the day. It came home to her now with double force. Only some cataclysmic happening could induce a maid to leave a note in the housekeeper's box. It was *lèse majesté* which had never happened to Mrs. Sands before. A waiter pulling Bleucher's mustache without warning could not have more completely tumbled hotel tradition to the ground.

Fright and annoyance were mingled strangely within her as she walked the length of the 15th floor to the small service room at the end, where Carrie stayed on duty until twelve, six nights a month, alternating with maids from the other floors.

The service room contained a plain kitchen table and chair, and the shelves offered an auxiliary supply of linen and towels for late arrivals or emergency calls. Normally three other maids were on duty in similar rooms on the second, fifth and tenth floors, but during the summer slackness two night maids were sufficient for the entire hotel. Consequently, Mrs. Sands was not alarmed to find the service room deserted.

Carrie Ritter was taking care of half the house, from the ninth to the seventeenth floor, and was probably answering a call.

Her wristwatch showed 10:45 when she sat down in the chair to wait for Carrie's return.

For five long minutes she nervously tapped her foot against the floor before she checked with the telephone operator on maid-service calls.

There had been none for two hours or more.

White lipped, Mrs. Sands called the maid on the fifth floor to make sure. Carrie was not paying a surreptitious visit there. She sat down at the table again,

listening intently for footsteps on the service stairs, thinking how unearthly quiet and devoid of life a great hotel full of people could become.

Metal clanked softly farther down the hall, and she jumped to her feet with a start. Standing, she gave a foolish laugh and sat down in the chair again. She was not going to act like a blithering idiot, no matter how wrangled her nerves might become.

An elevator door had opened. Nothing more. She took out her vanity case and grinned at herself in the glass as she powdered her nose. From the service room it was impossible to see the hall, but she heard clearly the sound of casual footsteps and the opening and closing of a door.

Automatically she shut her vanity case and put it away. She found herself staring at the lurid cover of a cheap love magazine which lay on the table. As she looked at it, some strange sense of calamity touched her.

There were two things wrong. The first was that she had not looked at the magazine so obviously placed on the table for her to see. The penciled words scrawled on the cover were speaking to her, pathetically dumb. "I'm scared, Mrs. Sands, and I'm hiding in 1512."

She pulled herself slowly erect, using the table for support, and stepped out to the service foyer and from there into the green-carpeted hall. There she remembered the second thing that was wrong; a thing so ordinary she had noticed it Saturday night and never told.

She had heard the elevator door open, but she had never heard it close. It was the door of the second service elevator which was seldom used. Dark and empty, the motionless car yawned at her right. The sliding

door was held back by a hooked piece of wire. That same piece of wire had been there when she fled in terror from 1508, ten minutes before Dryden Winslow was hanged!

But Carrie was not in 1508. She was in 1512, crouching with the unreasoning terror of an ignorant servant among the summer-swathed furniture of the Parsons' suite, waiting for Mrs. Sands.

The thought drove caution and reason from her mind. Light-footed, she sped down the hall, thrust her passkey into the door and stepped inside, forgetting entirely the casual footsteps which had preceded her a few minutes before and the sound of the softly closed door.

She fumbled for the light switch, failed to find it, frantically called, "Carrie! Carrie! Where are you?" and breathed again as the girl's sobbing voice answered from the balcony above.

"Here, Mrs. Sands! Oh, God, please hurry! There's someone else in the room!"

"Don't be silly," she said sharply, trying to allay the girl's fear. She dashed up the short flight of stairs and stood looking down to where a beam of moonlight, filtering through the curtained windows, touched the crouched, white-aproned figure at her feet. "Stand up, Carrie!" she commanded. "You're all right now. Come along with me."

Slowly the girl got to her feet, facing Mrs. Sands. Tears glistened on her cheeks, rolling sluggishly down. "We won't get out of here alive, Mrs. Sands, I'm telling you now."

"You must stop crying, Carrie, and come. Nobody else is here." She knew she lied as soon as she spoke, for a shadow bulking large by a covered chair moved

in the room below. Helpless to speak or scream, she stood as the whistle sounded, cutting into her mind and soul.

She heard it and saw it all, detached and clear, and the truth was never near her—the whistle—the shot—and the body of Carrie Ritter, pretty in a dumpy sort of way, jerked from the balcony before her eyes to crash as a broken-necked corpse in the room below.

Choking and stumbling, she half fell, half walked, down the stairs for the door. Then, wanting light more than anything, she reached for the switch, and again the whistle came—binding her wrists in red-hot fiery bands, jerking her helpless to the floor beside the murdered girl.

Dimly she heard a dull crash of metal on metal and saw a flash of light as the door to the hall was opened and closed. Then casual, retreating footsteps told her the whistling hangman had gone on his way.

Chapter Twenty-five: WHOSE KEY?

Two MORE flashlight bulbs popped dully as the police photographer caught the layout of 1512 from different angles. He marked his plates and put them away, saying, "That's the works, Inspector."

Davis's mouth was working with quick tiny jerks which expanded and contracted the muscles of his jaws. He yanked a linen cover from a deep upholstered chair, tossed it on the floor and sat down. "Damn people who cover up their furniture when they go away! It gives me the creeps."

"It's necessary, Inspector, to keep out settling dust," said Bleucher.

"What dust?" asked Davis. His eyes were dull. He turned them away from a scrutiny of the manager's black-and-white striped dressing gown and, one by one, looked over the other people in 1512.

Captain Duncan Maclain was seated beside Spud Savage on a double settee. Glittering hardness replaced the dullness in Davis's eyes as they rested on the German shepherd which lay on the floor between Spud and the captain. He wondered how many people in the room had noticed what he saw.

The dog's almond-shaped eyes were deeper than Schnucke's. The breadth of the forechest spelled runner and fighter. The stance of the tail and the set of the white teeth showed indomitable courage and love of fighting rather than loyalty and kindness; and the dog was lying at Maclain's right, held by a leather leash instead of the guiding brace of the Seeing Eye.

The inspector's mind left 1512 for a moment and wandered back to a night when he and Sergeant Archer sat in Duncan Maclain's penthouse office months before. Once again he heard Spud Savage say, "Schnucke's not a police dog, Inspector. She's a German shepherd, trained for the task of intelligent guiding by the Seeing Eye. She wouldn't bite if you beat Maclain to death, because it's against every instinct she has.

"Any dog is a police dog, Inspector, when it's trained for police work. Take a German shepherd, the gentlest, kindliest, most intelligent dog in the world, and spend week after week in heartbreaking labor training it to obey every command and to bite—if you *can* train it to bite—and you have a police dog! By God, I'll show you, Inspector, why Duncan Maclain keeps two German shepherds—one named Schnucke, to guide him from

the left; and the other, a trained police dog named Dreist, to protect him, from the right."

He wondered if the same words had come back to Sergeant Archer too—and the tone of Spud Savage's voice when he introduced them to Dreist for the first time: "He's from the same stock as Schnucke—only she's trained to be safe as a little child, and Dreist's trained to be dangerous as a loaded gun. He works only with me and Maclain—after weeks of special instruction with him under the best trainer in the world.

"His first duty is to protect us against assault. He'll stand, lie or sit down instantly at command, and stay there for hours while we're away. He's been taught to bite, but not to tear. He can jump an obstacle eight feet high and clear ten to twelve feet in width. He'll carry and fetch over obstacles, or through fire and water, and by nosework can find an object which has been thrown away hours before.

"But he bites, Inspector, because he's been trained to bite—not because he wants to—for he's a German shepherd, despite the fact that he's a police dog, and it's against every instinct he has to bite a man!"

The departure of the photographers brought the inspector back to the present. Uncomfortably he turned away from Dreist's implacable gaze, knowing that Duncan Maclain anticipated trouble when he brought his police dog along.

Davis was a brave man, but the animal made him uneasy. It possessed some of Duncan Maclain's calm, detached efficiency which trapped erring humans with the precision of a finely adjusted machine. When Duncan Maclain's expressive face set itself into an unreadable mask, Davis felt he might find more human emo-

tions inside a high-powered shell. He was wrong, he knew, but the impression remained.

He placed his elbows on his knees and began to beat a fist into his palm with erratically spaced blows. He had already been over the scene *ad nauseam,* and the answer was far away. He looked from Dr. Sylvester's round head to Mr. Fralinger, who was gazing out of the window. From the assistant manager he turned toward Mrs. Colling-Sands, who was stretched out limply on a comfortable lounge in the corner. She was breathing more regularly and color was creeping back into her face. "More brandy, Mrs. Sands?"

"Thank you, no." She spoke without looking at him, staring disinterestedly at the high ceiling of the room.

"I don't believe Mrs. Sands is in any condition to be questioned," said the doctor. "You've already brought her close to a collapse."

The inspector quit pounding with his fist and slapped one hand sharply against his thigh. "Goddam it," he burst out, "I've got to know things—even if I break down everybody in the hotel! There's a madman loose around here—or I'm nuts myself. Silence isn't helping any. What about it, Mrs. Sands?"

"Go ahead," she said determinedly. "I'm all right now. What do you want to know?"

"Good!" said Davis emphatically. "You have more sense than the rest of this hotel put together. Don't mind if I swear. I'm not cussing you; it's myself."

Mrs. Sands managed a faint smile. "You could do some for me, too, Inspector. I feel like it."

"Swell!" His face softened, and he gave a quick grin which was instantly gone. "The murdered girl talked to you this morning, you said?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In the linen room downstairs on the second floor."

"She came down on her own?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"She was frightened, so she said."

"Of whom?"

"Doctor Lorenzo Ynez." Mrs. Sands repeated Carrie's story, telling of the blue cord. The inspector started to chew on a toothpick and said:

"See if he's in, Archer, and bring him here."

When the sergeant had departed he turned back to Mrs. Sands and said, "The girl started to tell you something downstairs and didn't finish. Why?"

"Mr. Bleucher came looking for her. He'd been making an inspection with Mr. Fralinger and found no maid on the fifteenth floor. She stopped when Mr. Bleucher came in, and I told her I'd see her later."

Sergeant Archer came back in and said, "Ynez isn't there. I'll phone down and have them watch for him in the lobby."

"They're already watching," said Davis. "Skip it. Now I have your story like this, Mrs. Sands. Carrie Ritter told you she overheard a row between Holden and Ynez, and about the sash in the closet. She had more to tell you but was interrupted. This afternoon you found the cord exactly where she said. Ynez walked in on you and started to get tough—and Mr. Fralinger stepped in just in time to stop trouble. Miss Marcia Forrest sent for you herself, through the doctor here; and you made the trip up to Riverview Home, where you met Captain Maclain."

"That's right." Mrs. Sands's voice was weak. Her cheeks had paled again. Watching her, the doctor asked, "More brandy?"

"No," she said, "but I'd like some water, please."

Mr. Fralinger went to the serving pantry in the foyer close by the apartment door. The room was silent except for the swish of running water and the clink of ice in a glass. When he returned Mrs. Sands drained half the water greedily and sat up more erect against the cushions at her back.

"Do I have to go over what happened here tonight again?"

"A few points," said Davis. "You came up to the service room on this floor in answer to the girl's note?"

"Yes."

"That was about quarter to eleven?"

"Yes."

"But it was eleven before you saw the note she'd left you on the magazine?"

"About that. I'm not sure."

"In the meantime you'd heard the elevator door open, footsteps in the hall, and the sound of an apartment door being opened and closed?"

"That's right."

The inspector took his toothpick and worked vigorously on his teeth. "You say the service elevator, which was seldom used, was standing empty and dark when you passed it on your way to this room?"

"Yes."

"And that same elevator was at this floor Saturday night when you went down to 608?"

"I'm certain it was."

"That's easy to explain, Inspector," said Bleucher.

"Most of the staff know that elevator is seldom used. Carrie Ritter was on duty here Saturday night herself. We're shorthanded, and some of the maids are having to work long hours. She might have brought it upstairs to save herself a walk."

"A walk, Rudolph?" asked Duncan Maclain. "There're other elevators running which the maids can use."

"So!" exclaimed Bleucher. "But an elevator would be handy when a maid is handling half a house, as now. She has calls from eight or nine floors."

"But Carrie Ritter didn't use that elevator tonight," Davis declared firmly. "Mrs. Sands heard the door open herself."

"What about the night watchman?" asked Mr. Fralinger. "You seem to have overlooked him entirely. He goes on duty at eleven."

"Then he wouldn't have used it at ten Saturday night," the captain put in.

"Have him questioned, Archer," the inspector ordered. "There's one more thing, Mrs. Sands; then I think you'd better get some much needed rest. Why in the hell did that girl pick 1512? She had a passkey. Why didn't she go into 1508, which is unrented?"

"I think she was scared of 1508," said Mrs. Sands. "Most of the staff know I was in that apartment Saturday night."

"There's more than that too," said Mr. Fralinger. "Her passkey wouldn't fit 1508. Dennis Riley fitted a new lock on the door yesterday. I didn't find out about it until this afternoon when I started to show the room."

"And whose order was that, please?" Bleucher asked furiously, his dark face purpling with anger.

"You'll have to blame me, Rudolph," said Captain Maclain. "Sergeant Archer gave the instructions to Dennis at my instance."

"If your idea was to keep everyone out of that apartment, Captain," the assistant manager went on, "it wasn't successful. Dennis reported tonight that someone broke into the locked tool-room in the basement and used the key-making machine. There may be ten duplicates to 1508 in circulation by now!"

Chapter Twenty-six: LOOKING FOR A HIDING PLACE

MRS. SANDS and Dr. Sylvester had left 1512, and Dennis Riley, called from his room in the basement, stood facing the inspector defiantly. His florid Irish face looked ready to burst over the tightness of his collar. Faced with police, top authority in the persons of Rudolph Bleucher and Mr. Fralinger, and the disconcerting presence of Duncan Maclain, Spud Savage and a dog, Dennis felt that arrogance was his only defense.

"Indeed now, you can't be blaming me. 'Tis your own orders I carried out, and to the letter too." He pointed a finger at Sergeant Archer. "'Tis him that told me to change the lock, keepin' one key meself and leaving the other on the numbered key rack in the tool-room."

"You've got me wrong, Dennis," the inspector soothed. "I'm not blaming you for anything."

"You were askin' if I kept a close watch on the tool-room. As though I could be nine places at once in the basement! 'Tis the engineer's job, anyhow, to be watching the keys—not mine."

"I understand," said Davis. "I'm merely trying to

find out exactly how you discovered the key machine had been used."

" 'Tis easy enough to say." Dennis's manner was a trifle more friendly. "I'm on my way from the trunk-room to the dining hall. I passed the tool-room, which is nothing more than a big slatted closet in the corner of the basement. The staple's hanging down where the screws had been taken out and dropped on the floor. It was easy to see the machine had been used—with metal filings all around."

"Just how does the machine work, Dennis?" the captain asked.

The porter swung to face him. "The key you want to duplicate is set in a vise, and the grinding wheels are fitted into the notches. Then you put in a blank beside the key, shove it against the grinding wheels, and you have two as like as twins."

"Then you have to have the original to make a duplicate?"

"Indeed, and you do"—Dennis openly betrayed his disgust at the question—"unless you could be remembering the looks of a Yale key to the fraction of an inch."

"I see." The captain thoughtfully pulled at an ear lobe. "There were only two keys to the new lock in 1508 when you put it on?"

"That's right, sir. One I put in the cabinet, as I said. The other's here on my ring now."

"The key cabinet's kept locked, too, isn't it, Dennis?"

"It's supposed to be, but 'twas pried open with a chisel."

"What time do you think this was done?"

"I'd say while the staff was at supper, sir. I was delayed, owing to taking up a trunk from the storeroom

to 502. The basement would be near deserted about then."

"Thank you, Dennis." Maclain drew a deep breath and added, "Is there anything more, Inspector?"

"Nothing," said Davis shortly. "You can go."

Dennis left slowly, to show he was in no wise worried.

When the door had closed behind him the captain asked, "How many keys are there to that tool-room, Rudolph?"

"Two."

"Who has them?"

"Mr. Fralinger and Olsen the engineer." Much of Bleucher's spirit was gone. His jaws sagged heavily under the weight of a second catastrophe to his precious hotel. "What can a new lock on 1508 have to do with these killings, Captain Maclain? I have the utmost admiration for you and for the police—but no one has been killed in 1508."

The captain took his Swiss repeater watch from his pocket and pressed the chime while the others looked on. Sweetly musical, it announced 1:45. He replaced it again and rose. The inspector noticed the gesture of pushed-down palm which kept the dog beside him on the floor.

"I'm going to ask Inspector Davis and Sergeant Archer to help me go over this apartment once more," he said wearily. "There's no need for you and Mr. Fralinger to help, Rudolph, unless you wish to do so, but please leave word and have me informed when Mr. Holden or Doctor Ynez come in. I'd like to talk to them tonight if possible."

"Will you have to disturb the Winslow family

again?" Bleucher was anxious but resigned.

"I think not."

The captain accompanied Fralinger and Bleucher to the door. He seldom faltered over a course he had followed once before, guiding himself with the surety of memorized paces and turns.

At the door he placed a hand on his friend's shoulder and said, "Saturday you told Mrs. Sands to quit worrying, Rudolph. Now I'm telling you."

Inspector Davis was leaning morosely on the back of his chair when Maclain returned.

"I want this place searched again before we leave, Spud," the captain told his partner. "You and Archer take it on, and I'll know it's done right. Take the adjoining bedroom first, then the rooms on the balcony. I'm looking for the weapon that was used to hang that girl—so use your own judgment. Bureau drawers—closets—and furniture."

"Would the murderer have had time to hide it here, Dunc?" Spud asked. "I thought Mrs. Sands heard him leave."

"We can't count on what she heard," Maclain declared. "Her testimony's not any too reliable under such a shock. She may have fainted. Take Dreist with you, if you don't mind. I don't want him on my mind for the next few minutes."

"That's fine," said Sergeant Archer sarcastically. "Put him on mine! But I warn you now—I'll search with one eye on the search and one eye on the dog. With him around, I wouldn't be surprised if I found my own hand in a bureau drawer!"

The inspector watched Spud and Archer disappear into the adjoining room before he gave vent to feelings

which had been bottled up in him for some time. They took the form of acid comment on the captain's admonition to the departing Bleucher a few moments before. "Don't worry, Mr. Bleucher," Davis mimicked. "Your hotel's in competent hands. Half the damn police force is hanging around it, cooling its feet in the lobby—and Duncan Maclain is here with his trick dog Dreist ready to chew the legs off the next naughty man who drops a body out the window."

The captain's eyebrows went up in a delighted wriggle. "You're most refreshing, Inspector. A trifle impetuous perhaps, but refreshing nevertheless. Are you ready to make an arrest?"

"God Almighty, Maclain!" the inspector banged a fist down on the top of a chair. "Arrest, hell! I'm ready to put steel doors on the front of Doncaster House and call it the Tombs. Look now, you tell me about it, you're so damn smart!" He ran swiftly up the stairs to the balcony and called down, "You can't see me, but I'm up here—standing just where Mrs. Sands said the girl slid over the railing in front of her eyes. That's a swell picture, isn't it? You might get a rope down from above over Dryden Winslow, but try to get one down from above here—with nothing but ceiling over your head! Figure that one out if you've got an answer, and let me know!"

The captain walked to a place about ten feet from the balcony, just below where the inspector was standing, and reached out a hand to touch a deep upholstered chair beside him. The linen cover which had shrouded it lay in a heap on the floor.

"You can see the marks, Inspector, where the girl's feet struck on the rail?"

"Yes," said Davis. "What of it?"

"Then I'm standing on the spot where Mrs. Sands claims she saw something move."

"That's right," said Davis between his teeth. "A murderer stood down there and whistled at the girl, and she was so scared she fell over the railing and broke her neck. Then he wrapped red-hot wires around her throat and choked her to death. Now tell me *she* was hanged from above."

The captain's face was set into a mask. "You keep misquoting me, Inspector. I never said either Winslow or the girl was hanged from above. Winslow was hanged from the *side,* from the terrace of 1508; and the girl you're so ably impersonating was hanged from where I'm standing now—from *below!"*

Davis leaned over the side of the balcony with his hands clenched hard on the rail. "Hanged with what, Captain Maclain? A traveling crane?"

The captain located the arm of the chair beside him and sat down on it, feeling the pile of an Oriental rug on the floor with the toe of his shoe.

"Isn't it strange, Inspector, what narrow limitations there are to the human mind? I'm considered quite clever because I can remember intricate moves in a chess game. People ask me, 'How can you think of so many things at once?' Actually, I'm thinking of only one thing—chess. Tonight I've been guilty of the same fault—and so have you and Archer and Spud. We've jumped from one important thing to another and have unskillfully failed to piece them together as a whole. If I had a jigsaw puzzle here I could show you what I mean. We've left out the center piece—the dull metallic crash which Mrs. Sands claimed she heard just be-

fore the murderer left this room."

The inspector quit his place on the balcony and came downstairs to stand in front of Maclain. "I thought it had something to do with the opening and closing of the door."

"So did I," the captain admitted, "but Mrs. Sands said it sounded like metal on metal."

The captain rose to his feet and stood much like a sleepwalker, staring blankly toward the foyer. "I have just killed a girl, and another woman is running down the stairs." He paced off several steps and stopped. "She's going to reach for the light switch—and I know exactly where it is. Why don't I kill her, Davis? Why don't I put her out of the way—so she'll never trouble me again? It's just another murder."

Fascinated, the inspector watched Maclain turn accurately to face the foyer.

"I'll tell you why," the captain went on. "Because the room's dimly lighted by moonlight, and she's standing in the foyer at the foot of the balcony stairs. I can't see her, Inspector, but I can see her hand when it reaches for the switch. So that's what I get. I drag her in beside the dead girl and start to make my escape. But I'm clever as hell. I may be seen in the hall, but I'm not going to be seen with my murderous little contrivance which has already snuffed out two lives. I've arranged a hiding place which is quick and secure, and on my way to the door."

The captain stepped forward quickly, turned to the right, and entered the serving pantry with Davis at his heels. The inspector found the switch and turned it on. His pulse was fast as he watched the captain open and close the electric refrigerator door.

"That's not the sound I'm looking for," said Maclain. "It's too soft, and the door is edged with rubber. Anyhow, it's a foolish hiding place—and our quarry hasn't been foolish so far."

With thumb and fingers of each hand he grasped the corners of the refrigerator at the bottom and felt it swiftly up to the top. A click had sounded, followed by the faint hum of a silenced motor.

The captain listened for an instant before he said excitedly, "That motor's in the top, Inspector. Look here." He pushed up with both hands against the white enameled edge. The top, hinged at the back, lifted as easily as the top of a large victrola.

The inspector bent forward eagerly and looked inside at a welter of coils and wires surrounding the softly running motor.

"What's there?" Maclain asked sharply.

"Nothing but the mechanism of the refrigerator—a lot of wires and things."

"You're sure they're wires, Inspector? Here, take my hand and let me feel. Keep it clear of the motor."

Wonderingly, the inspector took the captain's wrist and guided the searching fingers. The captain felt around the bottom edges of the box, gently squeezing cable and wires. After a moment he withdrew his hand and gave a disappointed sigh.

"I was afraid, when I thought of it, we might be too late. Let the lid drop."

The inspector obeyed, and the white top fell, closing tightly with a muffled crash of metal on metal.

"Spud and Archer are wasting their time," said the captain. "Let's go back into the room, and I'll put my cards on the table."

Chapter Twenty-seven: INHUMAN AND UNREAL

"MURDER AND BLACKMAIL. It's a pretty combination." The captain let his hands play over the Parsons' ornate writing table, collecting various bronze accouterments and arranging them into some obscure pattern of his own design. Spud Savage sat in a chair to his left, while Davis and Archer occupied a settee at his right.

His detachment was complete. Oblivious to the three interested men about him, he arranged bronze-handled shears, paper cutter and two pens to form a square. Inside of the square he placed a crystal inkwell and ran his fingers over the result with the pleased air of an architect admiring an impromptu model of house and grounds.

"You were talking about murder and blackmail," the inspector reminded him. "It sort of got your mind off of what you were doing. You forgot to put a doghouse in the yard for Dreist."

"Thank you, Inspector," the captain said seriously. "I'll remedy that with a stamp box." He reached unerringly for the article in question, placed it on edge just inside the paper cutter and opened the lid. Spud grinned at the sergeant, and Archer said:

"It has two compartments. You can put Schnucke in there with him too. Five minutes more of waiting and you can add suicide to murder and blackmail. I'm going in the bedroom and hang myself on the shower with a necktie."

"And don't forget to whistle," Spud put in, taking another turn of Dreist's leash about his hand.

Watching the dog keenly, Inspector Davis, face gray,

reached out suddenly and clutched the captain's arm. "God, Maclain," he said intently, "I've just been looking at Dreist and the leash! I'm beginning to get your idea. Either that, or I'm losing my mind. Several months ago I saw a show—"

The captain turned his head and said, "*Jumbo*. Spud saw it, too, and several others in this hotel."

"So did I," the sergeant added, "and I *have* lost my mind."

Davis started to rise, then sank back on his seat again. "It won't fit, Captain. It just won't fit. It takes too much skill. A lion tamer, perhaps, or somebody out of an act like I saw—but there're no lion tamers mixed up in this, and no actors either. Where the hell would a man get such a thing?"

"Let me tell what Spud and I have done," the captain insisted quietly. "You will see how hard I've tried to answer that question myself. I even checked up to make sure none had been stolen from the show. Let's start at the beginning and see what we have. We'll finish sooner. Most of it you and Archer already know, but I'll repeat it again to make the picture clear." He folded his hands on the edge of the desk. "Let's start with the Forrest sisters and the American scene:

"Purcella Forrest and her sister come from an excellent family. More than twenty years ago Purcella loved a man slightly too well. He intended to marry her, because they loved each other, but he was killed in an accident a few days after he learned she was pregnant. The girl we know as Gertrude Winslow is Purcella Forrest's daughter by the man she loved!

"We come now to Dryden Winslow. His wife, Baxter Winslow's mother, had been dead less than a year

at that time. He was making a play for Purcella. She was a beautiful, high-strung girl, but poor. Desperate at the thought her baby would be born nameless, and without means of support, she accepted his advances shortly after her lover was killed, thinking she could drag him into marriage. It didn't work out quite that way."

"Apparently not," said Archer dryly.

"But part of it did, Sergeant," Maclain continued. "Dryden Winslow accepted the baby as his own but refused to marry the girl. Instead, with the brokerage failure behind him, he legally adopted the child which he thought was his own daughter. He left the two children, Gertrude and his own son Baxter, with Purcella and her sister Marcia, and went to Australia, as we know."

"The blackmail begins to stink like a cheese to my feeble mind," the inspector exclaimed. "It's a grand and glorious setup!"

"It is," Maclain agreed, "for Winslow stipulated that the child should not be told she was adopted, and Winslow didn't know that the child was not his own. The Forrest sisters valiantly guarded it, although there were leaks, as there always are.

"Somehow the Carruthers, who raised Emmett and Rose Black in England, learned or guessed the truth. Emmett Black overheard some of it as a kid but kept his mouth shut until this afternoon—when his love for Gertrude Winslow brought it to a showdown in Ynez's Riverview Home."

The inspector's eyes crinkled at the corners. "There, Captain Maclain, is a beard I'd like to pluck!"

"A delightful fellow, Inspector, and clever too. He

makes a worthy partner for the Honorable Paul Holden, O.B.E.—who is also a keen student of human grief. Beaten down by years of keeping her motherhood from her own daughter, Miss Purcella Forrest was easy prey. Holden met Gertrude Winslow at a cocktail party. It's his business to search for lucrative fields, and an absent father in Australia looked like a good ripe plum."

"Sounds like Mrs. Sands's description of Doctor Ynez's lips," Spud remarked. "There are times when my gentlemanly fist itches to dent itself on somebody's teeth."

"The only way to deal with blackmailers, at that," said Archer. "I think I can guess the rest."

"I thought I could, too, Sergeant, but I missed a lot. I'm not sure I know it all now, but I know enough." Maclain's face set in steel lines. "Holden probably spotted Miss Purcella as the neurotic key to his scheme. It wasn't much of a job to get her started going to Ynez, and the doctor did the rest. He's not only a clever hypnotist, but a scientific one—judging from the machine Mrs. Sands saw in his office today.

"Miss Purcella talked, and after she talked, she paid —and Miss Marcia too—for Holden, in a nice way, threatened to expose Purcella's deception to Dryden Winslow. Both the sisters knew what that meant; their income from Winslow would immediately cease, and Miss Purcella's daughter would be cut off without a penny."

The captain paused and closed the stamp box serving as a miniature kennel with an angry click.

"Holden became greedy. The meager savings of the Forrest sisters were nearly gone. He checked up on

Dryden Winslow much as I did and found out that Winslow was wealthy—and ill. Thereupon he decided to marry Gertrude. It's part of a blackmailer's business to be charming when it is worth his while. In addition, he turned the screws and forced the unwilling Forrest sisters to further his suit."

Spud was flushed and angry. "I don't see how the Forrest sisters could egg a girl they loved into a marriage with such a crook!"

"He probably pointed out that divorce was easy but poverty and disgrace could never be overcome," the captain supplied. "But fate tricked him today in the person of Emmett Black. It was that complex scene which Dryden Winslow stepped into when he arrived at Doncaster House."

"And what about the mess he left in Australia?" Inspector Davis took out a handkerchief and wiped his mouth.

"Read the transcripts we made from our records, Spud," the captain directed. "I'd like to hear them again myself."

Spud Savage released Dreist's leash and said, "Down, Dreist, down." He took some crinkly sheets of legal foolscap from his inside pocket, spread them on his knee, then began to read:

"Transcript of an Ediphone record made for Captain Duncan Maclain by Rena Savage re the murder of Dryden Winslow:

"(1) Information obtained from the Melbourne police; checked with the New York police; checked with a Bible found in Doncaster House by Captain Maclain; and checked with the firm of Wendell & Wendell, Dryden Winslow's solicitors in Melbourne.

"April 4, 1916. Dryden Winslow married Amy Fleckner, age 29, daughter of a cattleman, John Fleckner. He had lived with

her less than a month when he found she was involved with a notorious character known to the Australian police as Louis James. Investigating further, Dryden Winslow discovered his wife had a seven-year-old illegitimate son by James, and that the child (which she had named Timothy Fleckner) was kept by his grandfather on the Fleckner cattle ranch—"

"Skip the details, Spud," the captain interrupted, "and read the information given us by Wendell & Wendell. The part about the wife and child is quite clear, isn't it, Inspector?"

"It's the clearest part of the whole thing to me," said Davis. "Go on, Spud."

Spud rustled over the sheets and continued:

"Dryden Winslow had kept a will with his attorneys, Wendell & Wendell, for some years. He took it from them shortly before his departure for America in 1937, giving them the following instructions:

"He wanted his estate settled without complications and wished to disinherit entirely his wife, Amy (Fleckner) Winslow, so that not one penny of his money would ever go to her or to her illegitimate son, Timothy Fleckner. To accomplish his ends he had converted his holdings into money which he was taking to America with him, together with the Fleckner family Bible which held a record of his marriage and the birth of Amy Fleckner's illegitimate child.

"Due to his ill health and imminent death, he had made a holographic will in the back of the Fleckner Bible. This was witnessed by two clerks in the office of Wendell & Wendell (John Arthur and Elizabeth Knott)."

The inspector stood up, interrupting, and leaned on the edge of the desk. "That's burned into my brain, Captain. What's the answer? Who killed Winslow and this girl?"

The captain shoved inkwell, scissors and paper cut-

ter away from him with a quick decisive gesture. "Someone who fills these conditions, Inspector, unless I'm wrong. The murderer had to know that Dryden Winslow was coming to America. The murderer had to get Dryden Winslow into Doncaster House. The murderer had to know that Dryden Winslow had the Fleckner Bible in his possession, and what it contained. The murderer had to have means of getting the Fleckner Bible out of 1510 and secreting it in the hall. The murderer had to have access to 1508, for Winslow was killed from the terrace of that apartment. The murderer had to have a motive and therefore must be closely connected with Dryden Winslow in some way.

"Spud and I have spent a frantic day trying to fit all those requirements onto the same person. Everybody who attended the conclave in my office yesterday was photographed by cameras set in the walls. Spud took those photographs to the post office today, trying to find if anyone in the pictures had called there for Australian mail.

"Spud checked with Alexander Leftwich, Jr. who stage-managed *Jumbo,* to see if the weapon used could have been reported at any time as stolen from the show while it was in New York. We were out of luck on both counts."

"We were out of luck on the girl too," said Davis. "Why was she killed?"

"To keep her quiet, Inspector—the reason for most second murders! She saw the killer leaving 1508 on Saturday night. There's your case, Inspector, tied up in a bundle and dumped in your lap. But it's circumstantial and we need more proof—"

The four men jumped wildly to their feet. Shriek-

ing through the corridors of Doncaster House came a rising, falling scream—inhuman and unreal. It battered against the door of 1512, sending the hairs up straight on Dreist's back and ringing a startled exclamation of "God!" from the phlegmatic Archer.

It cut off in the middle with a pop, to be followed instantly by the sound of other screams as frightened tenants rushed for their doors.

With Dreist close by his side Spud ran for the apartment door and flung it wide, peering out into the hall. "There's no one here, Dunc," he called back. "It must have come from the floor below!"

"What must have come from the floor below?" Davis spoke in a monotone, and his fists were clenched by his side. "Before God, I'll die if we've got another hanging on our hands."

The captain's mobile mouth twitched strangely. "The hangings are over, Inspector. If there's another death it will be in the electric chair. The whistling hangman's whistled once too often. I'm closing in right now!"

Chapter Twenty-eight: WHERE THE WAIL CAME FROM

IT TOOK ALL of 20 minutes for Rudolph Bleucher, adroit in the art of quieting startled guests, to restore order to the 14th floor. Aided by Mr. Fralinger and Mrs. Sands, summoned from her room by phone, the manager evolved a garbled explanation which concerned a mythical young lady slightly the worse for drink who had fallen and screamed.

Mrs. Sands, bearing up bravely, was commissioned to patrol the other floors which might have been dis-

turbed.

"You can do more than I can, Mrs. Sands," Bleucher told her. "Tell them anything if you find them peering out into the hall, but get them to go back to bed." Accompanied by Fralinger, he joined the four men who were waiting by the service elevators on the 14th floor.

Bleucher had reached an end. He searched his knowledge of many languages to find what he wanted to say. Finally he looked at Maclain as though the captain were personally to blame, spread his hands wide and said, "Well, Captain, what? Who's killed now?"

The captain stood with his head turned slightly to one side, listening, oblivious to Bleucher's appeal.

"One of the service elevators is running," he remarked in a conversational tone. "Do you keep a man on duty all night?"

"No!" Bleucher exclaimed. "Now it is a service elevator become important! There is no boy on duty. I phoned down for the night engineer to bring it up to this floor. I do not intend to hamper the police, nor you, Captain, but unless your investigations are confined to the back of the house, Doncaster House will be vacant in a month."

"I understand perfectly, Rudolph, so I want your help right now. All I ask is a little time, and I'll turn over to the police the weapon used to kill Dryden Winslow and the girl."

Bleucher tugged at his mustache. "Very well. It is agreed. What do we do?"

"First," said Maclain, "we search the basement. I need a guide who knows every inch of it. Mr. Fralinger will do nicely."

"The basement?" said Davis. "What's the idea?"

"The idea is the dog, Inspector. He has a good nose. I'll take him along on leash and see what he can do."

The inspector opened his mouth and shut it again. He knew something about police dogs, but, better still, he knew Captain Duncan Maclain.

"How many entrances are there to this hotel, Rudolph?" the captain asked.

"Three. The front door. The service entrance at the west end which leads to the basement—and a door from the kitchen to an alleyway in the back."

"Good. Here's my plan." The captain was calm but decisive. "It must be carried out to the letter, or we may have another murder on our hands. I want those three entrances guarded."

The service elevator stopped and the door slid open in back of Maclain.

"I don't care who comes in, but *no one* is to leave. Rudolph, you take the lobby. Inspector, you take the service entrance at the west end of the house. Sergeant, I'll leave the doorway from the kitchen to the alley to you. There's one more thing. How many stairways lead from the basement to the office floor?"

"One," Mr. Fralinger supplied. "It comes up in the vestibule right beside the office."

"You take that, Spud. That leaves only the elevators. I don't want anyone to leave the basement while I'm there. Keep the two passenger elevators on the office floor. The engineer who's in this car now can watch the service cars."

"You understand that, Mr. Sorensen?" Bleucher asked the man in the car.

"Yes, sir. I'm to stick by these two cars and let no-

body up or down. Is that it?"

"That's it," confirmed Maclain. "How many servants sleep in the hotel?"

"Eight only," said Bleucher, "but their rooms are in a wing off the office floor. The others all go home at night."

"One last check before we go downstairs, Rudolph. I want to be sure everything is understood. You guard the entrance to the lobby. Spud, the stairway to the basement. Inspector Davis, the service entrance at the west end of the house; and Sergeant Archer, the door from the kitchen to the alley. Mr. Fralinger goes along with me. Are you armed?"

The assistant manager patted his hip and grinned. "I have an automatic, but I don't know what I could hit. I'm not much of a shot."

"Well, keep it handy," warned Maclain, "and keep your eyes open. Remember, I'm blind."

The elevator stopped at the first floor and let out Bleucher and Spud, then went on down to the basement. There Inspector Davis turned to the left and took the incline which led to the service entrance on the street level.

Dreist tugged at the leash. Lightly touching the assistant manager's arm, the captain followed the dog down the corridor to where another turned right toward the kitchen. The sergeant left them there to take up his post in the room where a single light glittered against burnished pots and pans.

Mr. Fralinger shifted the heavy automatic from his hip to the side pocket of his evening clothes. The whole procedure seemed pointless and was beginning to get on his nerves. He was closer to a crack-up than even

Mrs. Colling-Sands, although he tried to carry the whole thing off with great aplomb.

"That's not your regular dog, is it?" he asked Maclain.

"No," the captain said softly. "Dreist's a trailer and a searcher. I'll show you how he works. What's at our left? I can tell by the sound that we're close to a door."

"A partition is built along here," Mr. Fralinger explained. "There's storage space behind it, and a trunk room built along the front of the house." His voice was as low as the captain's, and it sounded hollow against the white tile of the spotless basement walls.

The captain stopped directly opposite the door, forcing Mr. Fralinger to ask, "How did you know it was there?"

"The sound of our footsteps." The captain leaned down and unsnapped the leash from Dreist's collar, saying, "Search."

In an instant the dog was gone. Mr. Fralinger stood fascinated in the doorway, watching Dreist's swift coverage of boxes, rolled-up rugs in moth-proofing, and several hotel chairs brought to the basement for upholstery and repair. Swiftly the dog wove in and out until he came to the locked wooden door.

At the heavy locked door of slatted wood which barred the way to boxes of the guests he stood for a moment, his nose pressed to a crack, his tail erect. The captain, hearing the pattering footsteps cease, brought him back to heel with a word of command. Farther down the corridor the servants' dining-room was dark. It took Dreist but a few seconds to cover it and return.

"What would he do if he found anything?" Mr. Fralinger asked.

"Bark," said Maclain, "until we came—and maybe trip up the man if he tried to run. Where is the toolroom that was broken into?"

"We're on our way there now."

The captain stopped, holding his hand lightly on Mr. Fralinger's arm. "Did anything strike you as queer about duplicates being made for 1508?"

The assistant manager thought it over a few seconds before he said, "I don't think I get what you mean."

Again the captain was listening, his head turned slightly to one side. "Whoever used that machine had to have a key to 1508 before they could make one. Isn't that true?"

"That's so," Mr. Fralinger admitted.

"Well, then," Maclain continued, "if they had a key to 1508 already in their possession, why did they want to make another? The reason's obvious, isn't it? They wanted it known that the key machine had been used."

"But what was the idea?"

"It was to diffuse suspicion, Mr. Fralinger—to make the police think that many duplicates might be in existence. The place was broken into, and the key closet was broken into. That looks like the job was done by someone outside of the hotel."

"That's clear enough, Captain Maclain, but why did they want to get into 1508?"

The captain paused to listen again before he replied. "The murder weapon was hidden in 1508, Mr. Fralinger. Up until this afternoon it was very cleverly hidden in the top of the electric icebox. Don't you see? It was taken out this afternoon and hidden again in 1512. The murderer went in there at eleven o'clock tonight to get it, for that was a rented apartment, although the

people are away. It was unfortunate for Carrie Ritter that she chose that particular suite as a place to hide, for she heard the killer and made a noise herself."

The assistant manager's voice was thick with excitement. "By jove, Captain Maclain, I believe you're right! And what do you expect to find here?"

"The weapon," said Maclain. "But we've got to be quiet and careful."

"You think it's hidden down here?"

"I know it's hidden down here. Listen!"

They were near the end of the corridor, where another asphalt incline led down to a subbasement below.

"What's that throb and hum?"

Mr. Fralinger gave a short, nervous laugh. "It's a pump in the engine room on the floor below."

"What kind of a pump?"

"An air pump for the vacuum system."

"And just where are they cleaning at this time of night?"

"Part of the hotel is rented out for offices and stores. The cleaning there is done quite late." Mr. Fralinger took hold of the captain's arm with a trembling hand. "That screaming wail up in the hall, Captain—that's what it was, now that you speak of it! Somebody opened one of the outlets to the vacuum system! It makes a frightful noise—like a dying shriek!"

"Certainly, Mr. Fralinger," the captain said soothingly. "Unless I've slipped, my trap's well set. What time is that cleaning over?"

"Before four. The engineer shuts off the pump and cleans the tank some time between three and four!"

The captain took out his repeater watch and listened

to it chime 3:15. "Our time's short," he said. "We have to hurry! First we'll send Dreist down to search the engine room below. Then we'll go down there and wait ourselves. It won't be long before the murderer will make an attempt to get the weapon which was disposed of so cleverly by being fed into the vacuum outlet on the 14th floor. At present it's in the dust tank in the engine room. If we hurry, we can get it first and await the arrival of our friend."

"You know whom we're waiting for, Captain?"

"I hope to know within an hour," said Duncan Maclain.

Chapter Twenty-nine: THE FINAL ANSWER

"WHAT'S AT MY LEFT?" the captain asked, releasing Mr. Fralinger's arm.

"A switchboard. Keep away from it. It controls all the power in the hotel."

The throb of the well-oiled pump sounded muffled and rhythmic in the room.

"Give me the layout."

"The pump is right ahead of you," Mr. Fralinger said. "The panel of switches to your left. On the other side of the room are steam pipes and gauges from the New York Steam. The vacuum tank's in the far corner, diagonally across from where you're standing. And the engineer has a desk and chair in front of the switchboard. I'll take you there and let you sit down. The hot-water tanks are through a small door, in an adjoining room."

The captain counted five paces before he reached the semicircular-backed chair. He seated himself, reached

out and located a green-shaded lamp on the desk, and said, "What other lights are in the room?"

"Four: one over each of the gauges and three droplights spaced equally across—just in front of where you're sitting. What do you want me to do?"

"Work fast," the captain said. "You know how to shut off the pump?"

"The switch on the board is marked. There'll be a howl from the cleaners if they're not through."

"Let them howl," said Maclain. "Pull it."

A snap and crackle followed, and the noise of the throbbing pump died away.

The captain's voice was edged. "Can you get into the tank quickly?"

"I think so. There's a door near the bottom. I'll give it a try."

"Down, Dreist," the captain ordered as the dog moved restively by his side.

He heard Mr. Fralinger's footsteps cross the room, and a moment later the assistant manager said, "It's easy. The cleaning door is just fastened on by lugs. A turn of an inch will release it. You're looking for a rope, aren't you?"

"Or something similar," said Maclain.

A sound of metal on asphalt followed, then the engine room was silent; so silent that the captain's sensitive hearing distinguished the slow drip of oil in a pan. Over the slow methodical dripping came another sound—the swish of something flexible drawn over a metal edge.

It made hardly more rustle than a long slim snake sliding through the branches of a tree.

When Mr. Fralinger whispered "My God!" the two

words broke into the tenseness of waiting loud as a blown-out tire. Straight in his chair, Captain Maclain placed both hands side by side on the blotter before him. Slowly he spread his fingers wide and touched the tips of his thumbs.

"You'll have to hurry, Mr. Fralinger. What have you found?"

"I don't know." The assistant manager spoke so low that the captain leaned slightly forward to catch his words. "I've never seen anything like it before."

"Perhaps I can help you if I describe it." The captain's hands pressed down hard with concentration. "You will remember I have to picture it in my mind. Thirty feet of death aimed by pointing the handle as a killer points a gun. It's a whip which you have pulled out there on the floor—or, rather, two whips, one within the other.

"When the first was carefully plaited, the second was braided around it—and the lashes are made of narrow strips from the hide of a kangaroo. Hand plaited, they taper from one inch at the top to infinity at the tip. It's no wonder—is it?—the police were so puzzled, for Winslow and Carrie Ritter were hanged with the Australian stock whip—which you're holding in your hand!"

The seconds which Duncan Maclain knew so well how to count were creeping lengthily by. From another part of the basement a switch clanked and machinery began to whir.

"One of the elevators is running," the captain said.

"Probably taking a guest upstairs." Mr. Fralinger stood up in the corner, announcing his move to Duncan Maclain by a crackle of starched shirt and a swish

of broadcloth clothes.

"There's no stock in the whip now, Captain Maclain. I wonder why."

"The handle had to be removed," the captain explained, "or the whip couldn't have been disposed of through the vacuum pipe." He spoke calmly, but his mind was not on what he said, for the sound he was waiting for so intently had begun—the quick, fast scrape of kangaroo hide sliding along the floor.

He had no time to move before Dreist attacked with his battling growl. Even with that warning, he was just in time.

He heard the whistle and the shot-like snap as he shoved himself to his feet.

The coiling lashes aimed for his neck cut into his arms before he fully rose. Wrapping him tightly, they bit into his flesh with searing tendrils which would have broken his neck with a single jerk had he still been in the chair.

He spread his arms and tore at them wildly. Suddenly they were loose, and he knew that the butt of the whip was free. He pulled it toward him, coiling its dusty length in one hand.

"Dreist will tear you to bits if you move," Maclain said coolly. "But I assure you he won't harm you if you stay still and on the floor. You're skillful as hell with a stock whip, Timothy Fleckner, but you should learn more about dogs. Dreist attacks without warning at sight of an upraised hand.

"It seems to me that the whistling hangman has whistled his last sad tune!"

"Personally," said Duncan Maclain, "I think he's a

delightful fellow compared with the firm of Holden and Ynez." He poured himself a liberal portion of Bleucher's prime Scotch and settled back comfortably in the manager's personal chair.

Davis and Archer had departed with their prisoner, who insisted the depths of degradation were to be captured by a blind man and a dog.

Mrs. Colling-Sands, looking anxious, and attractive in a black negligee, was reclining on a daybed in the corner of the manager's living-room. Spud Savage, seated near her, was holding Dreist's leash, and the big German shepherd, head on paws, was watching Bleucher with a glint of dislike in his light gray eyes.

"Every murder boils down to one thing, Mr. Bleucher," said Spud. "That one thing is that one person only *can* be guilty. It's Dunc's ability to make the guilty party fit all the facts which makes him tops."

"So," said Bleucher, "you pick my assistant manager, Mr. Fralinger, who fits none of the facts."

The captain set down his glass and ruefully felt of his arm. "He fitted one fact, Rudolph. He damn near hanged me around the middle. And I disagree with you on the rest of your statement. I'll tell you much of what I told Davis and Archer. All the facts pointed to someone closely connected with this hotel." The captain raised his eyebrows. "As a matter of fact, Rudolph, I thought it was you."

"Idiot!" the manager spluttered. "You're clever at chess, yes! But as a detective—" He gave an eloquent shrug and reached again for his glass of wine.

"Well, I'll admit," said Maclain with a grin, "that I dropped you after the first step. Fralinger, whom we now know to be Winslow's stepson, Timothy Fleckner,

filled the requirements all the way. He wrote the letter which brought Winslow and his party to Doncaster House, and you signed it."

"Without reading it," said Mrs. Sands.

Bleucher opened his mouth and shut it again with an injured expression. "And what about the second act?"

"The Bible," said Maclain. "He was the only one who could have gotten it from Winslow's room—and whoever took it from Winslow's room knew exactly what they were looking for. His mother, Amy Fleckner, wrote him about Winslow's departure and Winslow's intentions—which he had made very clear to her; that he was going to give all his money away so she'd never get a cent. Fralinger took the Fleckner Bible from the Gideon cover—and he knew exactly where to look without wasting time—for he brought the Gideon Bible to Dryden Winslow himself."

"There's another point Dunc mentioned to me too," said Spud. "The Bible was hidden in one of your sand jars, covered over with a few inches of sand. Whoever hid it had to know whether those jars were dumped daily, or whether just enough sand was taken from the top to be replaced with fresh."

"Then things began to pile up." The captain sipped his drink again. "It was Spud who gave me the real tip-off on the weapon. He'd seen an act in *Jumbo*—which Mrs. Sands saw too—where a man wielding a stock whip flicked a handkerchief from a girl's breast pocket twenty feet away. He started Rena on some research about Australian stock whips. They're also known as Spanish bull whips and, skillfully handled, they can break the neck of a steer. Douglas Fairbanks used one in one of his pictures and had to practice for months to

attain any skill. That gave me another lead. If the stock whip was used, it was safe to assume the murderer was raised around cattle in Australia.

Again I was forced back to someone in the hotel. They'd gotten into 1508. That meant a passkey. The same thing held for 1512.

"But the clinching fact was why Carrie Ritter stopped talking yesterday morning to Mrs. Sands."

"That seems like weeks ago," the housekeeper declared. "That poor girl. I might have saved her."

"I doubt it." The captain shook his head. "She saw him come out of 1508 right after Winslow was killed, and that was fatal. He had to keep her quiet. She quit talking as soon as he and Rudolph came into the linen room. Fralinger must have noticed it then and decided if she stopped at the sight of him, she hadn't yet told everything she knew."

"And why did he go into 1512?" asked Mrs. Sands. "Did he see the magazine Carrie left on the table and know the girl was there?"

"His whip was concealed in the refrigerator in 1512," said Maclain. "It was originally concealed in 1508, although I couldn't find it when I searched there and didn't know for sure. I brought matters to a head by having a new lock put on the door. He wanted to kill Carrie, and, unfortunately for her, she was hiding in 1512 when he went to get it. He put it back into the refrigerator after she was killed. That was the clang of metal you heard, Mrs. Sands.

"He discovered the new lock when he was showing rooms, and tried to get more clever—too clever. He broke into the tool-room and the key rack when he had keys to both himself. He figured breaking in would

make it look as if an outside job. Then after he got the key to 1508, he decided to use the key machine and make it look like there were a lot of duplicates in circulation. That pointed all the more to someone connected with the hotel. A guest here might break in, but they'd get the key they wanted and leave—not stay there and use the key machine to put on a show."

The captain passed his hand wearily over his forehead and stood up.

"That's about all, Rudolph. I think I'll go home. I haven't had much sleep since our chess game Saturday night."

"You mean on that little evidence," said Bleucher, "you picked out the right man?"

The captain laughed. "Good Lord, Rudolph, there were a thousand other things which would keep me here till two tomorrow afternoon. The service elevator he left on the fifteenth floor, to get himself down to the office so he'd be there in a couple of minutes when Gertrude Winslow phoned for help. That was another thing that pointed to the hotel. But the main thing was that I knew when I found that whip in the vacuum tank, if I was there alone with him, he would try to get me out of the way.

"He'd taken the wooden stock out so the whip could be disposed of down the vacuum outlets. He was anxious then to get rid of the thing. He'd taken it from the refrigerator in 1512 when he got the glass of water for Mrs. Sands, rolled it up into as small a bulk as possible, and placed it in the serving pantry under the sink. He took a desperate chance and got away with it, for he picked it up and carried it out, Rudolph, when I was telling you good night and not to worry at the door."

"I didn't see it," said Bleucher defiantly. "How could he have had it then?"

"Probably," said the captain, "it was stuck in the hip pocket of his long-tailed coat. Then he made a mistake. He decided to drop it down one of the vacuum outlets on the fourteenth floor, and he forgot about the night cleaning and the fact that the pumps were on. When he opened the outlet, it gave that unmerciful shriek which aroused half the hotel. There was no help for it then. He had to shove the whip in and let it go. He put the stock in his hip pocket and ran on down to the service stairs where he hid for a few minutes until he joined the quieting party.

"I could go on indefinitely, Rudolph—about the whistle and shot coming only from a whip; about Ynez and Holden badly clouding the issue; and principally about illegitimate sons who'd grown up in Australia and disappeared, taking their Australian accent with them.

"Timothy Fleckner fitted all the requirements—from sharing in the fortune of a man who had left his mother flat, to being the right age of the man who filled all the requirements for the killer in Doncaster House. I put them both together—and got the whistling hangman! And now—I don't care if there're ninety-four things you still don't understand—Spud and Dreist and I are on our way to the kennels. We're about to go to bed."

Mrs. Sands left her comfortable place on the day-bed to go to her own apartment. "I hope everything straightens itself out for the Forrest sisters," she said pensively; then added with a touch of bitterness, "and I hope that Paul Holden and Doctor Ynez have to do

a little paying on their own! Can't you see to that, Captain Maclain?"

The captain took her arm and accompanied her to the hall. "There's one thing I'll try to make Mr. Holden pay," he told her with a grin, "but I'm afraid it's going to take Spud and Dreist both to collect it—that's my fee!"

ELEVATORS
DR. YNEZ
PAUL HOLDEN
17TH FLOOR ROOF GARDEN
TO SERVICE ROOM
APT. 1508
PARSONS' SUITE 1512
DRYDEN WINSLOW 1510
16TH FLOOR BALCONY
15TH FL. BALCONIES
608 TERRACE
DONCASTER HOUSE
SCENE OF MURDERS IN
"THE WHISTLING HANGMAN"
A DELL BOOK